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US announces $10 billion in arms sale to Taiwan P8

India Oman trade deal boosts gulf ties P9

P12 Kayadu Lohar joins Dq's 'I'm Game'

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Karnataka Assembly passes hate speech bill; BJP calls it 'Brahmastra'

The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025 empowers the government to order the removal of hate speech content from online platforms.

BELAGAVI

The Karnataka Assembly on Thursday passed a bill to curb hate speech amid loud protests. The Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill—the first of its kind in the country—provides for imprisonment of up to seven years and a fine of up to ₹1 lakh.

The bill was passed despite strong opposition from BJP MLAs. Cleared by the Cabinet on December 4, it was tabled in the House on December 10 by Home Minister G Parameshwara.

The Minister said the earlier proposal of a 10-year jail term for repeat offenders had been reduced to seven years. As per the bill, hate speech includes any expression—spoken, written, signed, visually represented, or communicated electronically—in public view, intended to cause harm, disharmony, enmity, hatred, or ill-will against an individual or group, living or dead, or against a community, affecting public interest.

During the debate, Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh said coastal Karnataka was "burning" due to hate speech and hate crimes. BJP MLAs from the region objected to the remark and entered the well of the House in protest, followed by other party legislators. Amid the commotion, the Assembly passed the bill.

The legislation also empowers the government to direct the removal of hate speech content from media platforms and applies to communication made publicly through verbal, print, visual, or electronic means.

Lok Sabha clears G Ram G Bill, Oppn tears copies

NEW DELHI

After the House was adjourned, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the opposition would strongly oppose the Bill.

The G Ram G Bill, which will replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, was passed in the Lok Sabha amid a massive protest by the Opposition MPs this morning. Members of the Opposition, who wanted the Bill sent to a standing committee, protested in the Well and tore up papers after the Speaker said the legislation had been discussed at length. The Bill will now be tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

Earlier, several members of the opposition, including Congress's Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, DMK's TR Baalu and Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav, opposed the Bill. The Opposition MPs said removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from the law is an insult to the Father of the Nation, and also pointed out that the Bill puts more burden on the states.

Arguing in favour of the Bill, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the Congress has named laws only after Nehru and is now questioning the NDA government. He also countered Priyanka Gandhi's remarks, in which she said the government has a "craze" to change names. Chouhan said it is the opposition that has a "craze" to change names and the Narendra Modi government is only focused on work. MGNREGA, he said, was nothing but a tool of corruption and stressed that the new law has been brought after discussions with stakeholders.

The Opposition did not relent and several MPs entered the Well and started protesting against the Bill. Some of them then tore up papers. Speaker Om Birla said, "The people have not sent you here to tear paper. The nation is watching you."

Karnataka court angered by delay in Siddaramaiah MUDA case report

BENGALURU

A special court pulled up the Lokayukta over delays in filing the final report in the Muda case involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. With no final report filed, orders were deferred to December 23.

The Special Court for People's Representatives in Karnataka strongly criticised the Lokayukta for failing to submit the final investigation report in the Mysore Urban Development Authority (Muda) case, which involves serious allegations against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the alleged illegal allotment of 14 sites.

Despite earlier court directions to submit the final "B-report" by December 18, the Lokayukta produced only an interim progress report. Questioning the delay, the judge sought an explanation from Lokayukta officials, who stated that prosecution sanction against certain officials was still pending, making it impossible to file the final report.

During the hearing, the court directed the Special Public Prosecutor to produce the case diary. The prosecutor requested additional time and suggested that the report could be submitted in a sealed cover. This proposal was opposed by the complainant, Snehamayi Krishna, who alleged that there was an attempt to mislead the court.

Snehamayi Krishna further claimed that no proper investigation had been conducted in the case and accused the authorities of protecting the accused. He alleged that no witnesses had been examined despite clear court directions.

Expressing concern over how any order could be passed without a final investigation report, the court adjourned the hearing. Orders on petitions challenging the Lokayukta's B report and the clean chit granted to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and three others were deferred to December 23.

The Muda case pertains to allegations that Siddaramaiah's family illegally benefited from the allotment of 14 high-value sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority, allegedly in violation of land allotment rules.

According to the agency, Yasir Ahmad Dar allegedly actively participated in the blast conspiracy and had sworn to conduct self-sacrificial operations

NIA arrests ninth Kashmir resident in Red Fort blast case

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday arrested a Jammu and Kashmir resident, who the investigators said was a close associate of alleged suicide bomber Umar-un-Nabi, the prime accused in the Red Fort blast case. This is the ninth arrest in the case.

According to the agency, Yasir Ahmad Dar allegedly played an active role in the conspiracy behind the blast that claimed 15 lives and left many others injured on November 10.

An active participant in the conspiracy, Dar had allegedly taken an oath for carrying out self-sacrificial operations, the NIA said.

"The 9th person to be arrested in the case, Yasir Ahmad Dar is a resident of Shopian, Srinagar (J&K). He was nabbed by NIA from New Delhi, and placed under arrest," an NIA spokesperson said in a statement.

Dar was in close contact with the other accused persons in the case, including Umar-un-Nabi as well as Mufti Irfan, the agency said.

The NIA has so far made nine arrests, including Dr Muzammil Shakeel Ganai of Pulwama, Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather of Anantnag, Dr Shaheen Saeed of Lucknow and Mufti Irfan Ahmad Wagay of Shopian. The agency also arrested Faridabad resident Soyab.

QUICK READ

Man charred to death as parked car catches fire

PALAKKAD: A man was charred to death after a parked car caught fire here on Thursday, police said. According to police, the incident occurred at around 4 pm when locals noticed a car engulfed in flames on the roadside along the Dhoni-Mundur stretch near the Arimani estate. When people rushed to the spot, they noticed a man seated in the driver's seat of the vehicle, police said, adding that the fire was so intense that attempts to douse it failed.

Amit Shah mourns noted sculptor Ram Sutar's demise

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday condoled the demise of noted sculptor Ram Sutar, the architect of the Statue of Unity at Kevadiya in Gujarat. Sutar, 100, breathed his last at his residence in Uttar Pradesh's Noida late Wednesday night. In a post on X, Shah termed the passing of "great sculptor Ram Sutar extremely saddening".

Only constitutional courts can impose life imprisonment

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday held that the power to impose punishment of imprisonment for life without remission was conferred only on the constitutional courts and not on sessions courts. A bench of justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and K Vinod Chandran said life imprisonment given to an accused would be for the rest of the life and the power to grant remission and commutation cannot be curtailed by the session's court. "The sentence of life imprisonment cannot be directed to be till the end of natural life, by the sessions court which direction would be in conflict with the provisions of the CrPC.

E-KHATAS WITHOUT DELAY AND TROUBLE

Under the joint auspices of the Urban Development Department, the Directorate of Municipal Administration, and the Belagavi City Corporation, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated the e-Khata launch program at Suvarna Soudha on Thursday. The scheme will be implemented across Karnataka.

Rajnath Singh urges IAF to learn from Op Sindoor

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India's "high-impact, short-duration" operational capability was demonstrated by the armed forces during Operation Sindoor, while urging air force commanders to draw lessons from the decisive military action and stay prepared to deal with every future challenge. In his address at the Air Force Commanders' Conclave here, Singh also underlined that "21st-century warfare is not just a war of weapons", but also a "war of ideas, technology and adaptability". He praised the courage, speed and precision with which the Indian Air Force (IAF) destroyed terror camps during Operation Sindoor and effectively handled the "irresponsible reaction" from Pakistan.

'Rumors of carcinogenic elements in eggs are false'

BENGALURU

Health Minister Dinesh Gundurao has debunked the rumor that eggs contain carcinogenic elements. There is no carcinogenic element. No one needs to worry, it is safe to eat, he said.

BJP MLA Sunil Kumar, who raised this issue during the Assembly Question Hour, said that some information is being heard about eggs. He demanded that the Health Minister clarify this. The government has clarified this.

There is no need to worry about consuming eggs. Last year, 147 egg samples were tested. Only one of the tested samples failed, the rest were good. The minister has assured that eggs are good for health and can be consumed.

There is no need to worry about eggs. He clarified that eggs can be given to school children, they can be eaten, they are healthy.

Recently, a video was circulating on social media claiming that a certain brand of eggs contained a 'genotoxic' substance that could cause cancer. Naturally, this had caused concern among the people. Rumors that eggs contained banned carcinogenic substances had led to a situation where school children were reluctant to give them to them.

AGREEMENT INKED

India and Oman sign free trade deal during Modi-Haitham talks

MUSCAT

India and Oman on Thursday signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), marking a major milestone in their bilateral relationship as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in Muscat. The agreement was signed during Modi's visit to Oman, the final leg of his three-nation tour, which also included Ethiopia and Jordan. Modi was welcomed by Sultan Haitham at Al Baraka Palace, where the two leaders discussed ways to further strengthen the India-Oman Strategic Partnership. According to MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, discussions covered defence, security, trade and investment, energy, agriculture, technology, culture, and people-to-people ties, along with regional and global issues.

The leaders noted that 2025 marks 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and Oman. They described the CEPA as a "new chapter" in bilateral ties that will enhance market access, promote investment, strengthen supply chains, and support economic diversification and job creation. This is Oman's second FTA with an individual country and its first in nearly 20 years.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal signed the agreement on India's behalf, while Oman was represented by its Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef.

India-Oman bilateral trade stood at about USD 10.5 billion in 2024–25. Oman is India's third-largest export destination in the GCC region. India's key imports include petroleum products and urea, while exports range from mineral fuels and chemicals to food items and machinery.

QUICK READ

New bus stops to enhance Yellow Line connectivity

BENGALURU

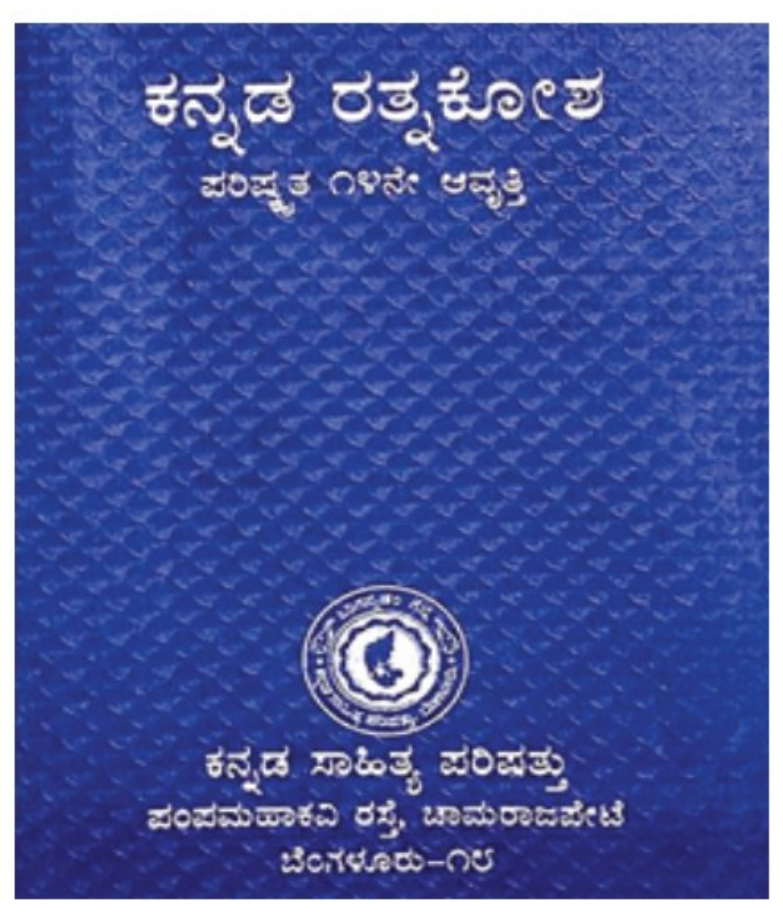
To improve last-mile connectivity on the Yellow Line corridor from RV Road to Delta Electronics, Bommasandra, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) and Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) commissioned new bus stops at several Metro stations. BMRCL said new bus stops are operational at Biocon Hebbagodi, Beratena Agrahara, Singasandra, Hongasandra, Central Silk Board and RV Road stations to facilitate smoother transfers between buses and Metro services. transfers between buses and Metro services.

The corporation also decided to relocate bus stops at Electronics City, Hosa Road and Ragigudda closer to respective Metro stations to reduce walking distance for commuters and improve accessibility

Lawyer killed in road accident

BENGALURU

A lawyer was killed and several others were seriously injured in a high-speed car accident near city's RMV Extension. The speeding Ciaz car first hit an elderly pedestrian Chandrasekhar Reddy (64). Chandrasekhar Reddy died on the spot after being hit by a car. The car then lost control collided with the Ertiga car in the RMV club parking lot. After that, five or six bikes were hit. Both the youths sustained serious injuries and both of them were seriously injured in the collision. Locals immediately rescued the injured and admitted them to a hospital. A case has been registered at Sanjayanagar traffic police station and the police are investigating.



Sons fulfil late teacher's dream of Kannada dictionary

BENGALURU

The lifelong effort of a late government school teacher to compile a comprehensive Kannada dictionary has finally come to fruition, made possible by the dedication of his sons. Kannada Shabdartha Kosha, documenting more than 1.4 lakh Kannada words, has now been officially published. T.K. Anantanarayana, a former school teacher, meticulously recorded Kannada words over three decades, from the 1930s to the 1960s. The family later donated these handwritten works to the Kannada Sahithya Parishat (KSP). In 2022, Anantanarayana's family began the process of tracing, verifying and compiling the material for publication. His sons, A. Sreenivasan (80) and A. Pattabhiraman (77), revisited the Parishat archives, carefully sourced the manuscripts and undertook the demanding task of completing the dictionary.

Experts call for protecting Jakkur Airbase as green heritage site

Experts urge government to preserve Jakkur airbase as historic green lung, warning against commercial development threatening Bengaluru's ecology

BENGALURU

Experts and environmental activists have urged that the Jakkur Air Force Training School and Jakkur Air Base should be preserved by complying with the condition imposed by the Maharaja of Mysore. The government should also take steps to protect the 'green space' that is essential for the city.

Jakkur air base, located in the northern part of Bengaluru city, which is becoming a concrete jungle of huge buildings, is not just a place for helicopters and small planes to fly, but is like the lungs of the city. The government should look at this 218-acre site with a history of 75 years, not for commercial purposes, but with environmental concerns. Environmental activists are of the opinion that this will become a valuable green-heritage site for the city.

The air base, which was opened in 1948 during the reign of the Maharaja of Mysore, is a testament to the beginning of the history of civil aviation. It is a cultural responsibility to protect a place of historical significance. The Jakkur Lake is also nearby, which is a haven for hundreds of species of birds, small animals and diverse flora in the area. In these days when the temperature of the city is rising, such vast open spaces act as air conditioners. If this is converted into buildings in the name of development, there is a fear that it will cause a big blow to groundwater recharge and upset the ecological balance of the city.

He said that if the Jakkur air base is developed as a 'living museum' or 'heritage garden', a museum showcasing the history of aviation, a spacious garden for the public and eco-friendly walkways could be built.

Development is not just about tall buildings, but also about preserving our history and greenery. Jakkur airbase should be protected from concrete encroachment and preserved as a green and heritage site for future generations. The government should think in terms of protecting the environment. They can build huge buildings and sports complexes elsewhere. But such a historical place should not be sacrificed for buildings, said AT Ramaswamy, President of the organization We for the Environment.

BIAL's new pick-up rules trouble corporate, group travellers

BENGALURU

BIAL's new airport pick-up policy curbs touts but creates hurdles for corporate groups, international delegates, and travel operators at Terminal 2 arrivals.

While Bengaluru International Airport Limited's (BIAL) newly implemented parking and kerbside pick-up policy is intended to curb touting, illegal parking, and congestion, it is creating significant logistical challenges for large companies, tour operators, and organisations that rely on pre-arranged private cabs to transport delegates and business groups. Even as airport officials describe the changes as teething troubles, passengers and corporate travel coordinators say the system is proving impractical for handling large groups arriving at Terminal 2, particularly international delegates unfamiliar with the airport's layout.

RK Misra, Co-founder of Yulu, who recently experienced the new system after landing on an international flight at Terminal 2, said while the intent behind the policy is understandable, initial hiccups remain. The staff guiding vehicles ended up sending my private car into the wrong lane. But these are early-stage issues. BIAL is trying to curb the menace of touts, taxis overstaying, and blocking pick-up points, which was making the entire area chaotic, he said. Misra added that with eight authorised taxi operators permitted at the kerbside, private cars continuing as before, and dedicated lanes for Ola and Uber, the system is largely streamlined. However, he flagged concerns around pre-booked and corporate cabs operated by travel agencies, which are widely used by companies and frequent flyers. "The long walk for such pick-ups is very inconvenient. Some solution needs to be found—either a pre-booked token system or priority access for a fee to address this gap, he added.

Urbanist Naresh Narasimhan said, noting that safety gains are significant. This new parking policy will certainly reduce touting. BIAL is working out options, and with the buggy system, pressure on senior citizens and mothers with children will be reduced. There will be some teething effects, but they are acceptable given the safety benefits, he said. However, companies that rely on private tour operators to receive large delegations paint a different picture.

Give 2 drops of polio to protect newborns: DS Ramesh

BENGALURU

With the aim of completely preventing polio among children under the jurisdiction of the Bengaluru East Municipal Corporation, the Pulse Polio Campaign is being organized from December 21 to 24 in collaboration with the Health Department, local bodies and other partner organizations. The main objective of this campaign is to ensure that no newborn or child under 5 years of age is deprived of polio vaccination, said East Municipal Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh.On December 21, a pulse polio vaccination program was organized at booth level across the East Nagar Palika from 8 am to 5 pm, and the public has been requested to bring newborn babies and all children under 5 years of age to the nearest booth and get polio drops administered, the Commissioner said.From December 22 to 24, a team comprising ASHA workers, primary health center staff, NGO members and volunteers visited every house in the municipal area to administer pulse polio drops to newborn babies and children under 5 years of age, and the Commissioner said that parents have been requested to take advantage of this. A total of 589 vaccination units will be operational to adequately reach all areas of the East City Corporation, and necessary arrangements have been made for the Pulse Polio Vaccination Programme. The Commissioner said that extensive IEC activities have been undertaken to create awareness among the public about the Pulse Polio Campaign.

North Commissioner launches weekly public phone-in grievance program

BENGALURU

With the objective of directly listening to and addressing various types of public grievances, the Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar, has initiated a weekly Phone-in Interaction Programme, to be held every Friday. This week's Phone-in Programme will be conducted on December 19, from 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 am. During this time, citizens can directly interact with the Commissioner and share their grievances related to road potholes and road repairs, streetlight maintenance, garbage collection and disposal issues, removal of dangerous trees and branches, mosquito control measures, stray dog control, maintenance and improvement of parks, removal of unauthorized banners and posters, clearance of footpath encroachments, e-Khata–related queries, and drainage-related problems, among others, and make effective use of the programme. Each complaint received will be registered on the Sahaaya 2.0 Portal and immediately forwarded to the concerned officials. Details regarding the registration of the complaint and the concerned officer will be communicated to the citizen through SMS.

Control Room Contact Numbers, Mobile & **WhatsApp:** 9480685705, **Landline:** 080-22975936 / 080-23636671. Citizens may also submit their grievances through the Sahaaya 2.0 mobile application.

B'luru Turf Club declared Glanders epicentre

BENGALURU

The district administration has taken strict action against the outbreak of glanders, a disease that is deadly to horses at the Turf Club.

Bengaluru. After a meeting of the District Livestock Disease Management Committee chaired by Urban Deputy Commissioner G Jagadish, the Turf Club has been declared as the 'epicentre' of the disease.

The order has been issued under the Prevention and Control of Communicable and Infectious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, with the main objective of preventing the spread of the disease.

In view of this order, the movement of horses, donkeys and mules has been completely banned within a radius of 2 km around the Bangalore Turf Club. The use of these animals for auspicious functions or recreational purposes such as public functions, processions, weddings is strictly prohibited.

The office of the Deputy Commissioner has advised the public and horse owners to follow these precautionary measures as Glanders disease is highly transmissible and can be transmitted from animals to humans.

B'luru South gears up for Pulse Polio drive from Dec 21

BENGALURU

Bengaluru South Municipal Corporation Commissioneri KN Ramesh chaired a meeting on Thursday with the officials of the health department of the corporation in the city limits to prepare for the Pulse Polio campaign.

They discussed the readiness of the Pulse Polio vaccination program to be held from December 21 to December 24.

Speaking after releasing the necessary banners and pamphlets for public awareness about the vaccination program, the Commissioner said that the total population of Bangalore South Municipal Corporation is 21,94,946 and the target is to vaccinate a total of 2,23,607 children under the age of 5 years during the campaign. On the first day, 21.12.2025, there will be booth activity, where children will be vaccinated in a total of 688 booths, and then for 3 days, i.e. from December 21 to December 24, the team will visit houses and organize a programme to vaccinate children.

He said that 60 transit teams have been formed to vaccinate children in areas such as malls, cinema halls, religious places, function halls, etc., and 75 mobile teams have been formed for children in apartments and high-risk areas.Additional Commissioner Shri Rachappa, Health Officer Balasunder and others were present on this occasion.

BDA to hold survey to resolve land dispute

BENGALURU

In a bid to resolve the long-running dispute affecting hundreds of site owners at Banashankari 6th Stage, BDA and the forest department will conduct a joint survey of the land in a couple of weeks. The decision was taken at a meeting convened by BDA following repeated complaints from buyers and allottees of sites in the layout in south Bengaluru. Officials resolved that a fresh survey is necessary as the earlier exercise did not involve the forest department, leading to conflicting claims over the extent of the land and buffer zones. A survey conducted by BDA along with the revenue department in September 2024 concluded that the forest department was in possession of an additional 16 acres and 31 guntas of land, over and above the originally notified 43 acres. However, the forest department disputed the findings, prompting a joint verification. A senior BDA official told, we are redoing the survey by taking all stakeholders on board to avoid confusion. We have fixed a deadline of two weeks, and BDA will also carry out a drone survey to get a clearer picture. If it is established that the forest department indeed holds the additional 16 acres, the buffer zone issue will be resolved automatically. Otherwise, we will examine the next course of action."The two departments are scheduled to meet again on Jan 7 to review the findings and decide further steps. More than 1,500 families who bought sites in the BDA-developed layout have been stuck in limbo for years. Formed in 2001, the layout comprises over 20,500 sites across 14 blocks. The dispute primarily affects the 3rd, 4th, and 5th blocks, where construction has been halted after the forest department claimed portions fall within a 100-metre buffer zone of BM Kaval Agara forest land.

MODERNISE HERITAGE BUILDING

Tenders to be invited for Russell Market redevpt: GBA Chief

BENGALURU

Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao instructed the officials to immediately invite tenders for the redevelopment of Russell Market in Shivajinagar. Speaking while visiting various places within the Shivajinagar assembly constituency of the Central Urban Corporation and inspecting them, he said that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) work related to the redevelopment of Russell Market has already been completed and he directed that it be implemented quickly.

Russell Market is a heritage building and should be made a living, permanent and people-friendly market for Bengaluru by giving it a modern touch. In this regard, he instructed the officials to make temporary arrangements elsewhere so that the traders in the market do not face any inconvenience and take steps to start the work.

During the market development work, adequate drainage system should be provided and appropriate arrangements should be made to prevent water from stagnating in the parking areas. He instructed to install a comprehensive waste segregation and composting system to ensure that the market is always clean.

All works including fire safety system, toilet facilities, installation of granite in public places, clock tower design should be carried out with quality. He also instructed to prepare a comprehensive plan to develop the areas around Russell Market.

MLA Rizwan Harshad said that Russell Market in Shivajinagar is a very ancient building and redevelopment work is being carried out without any harm to it. He also assured that all kinds of cooperation will be provided so that no problems arise locally.

In the redesigned Russell Market, ease of movement, visual observation and access facilities will be given high priority. He said that it will be reconstructed into a beautiful place for the convenience of both vendors and customers.

Additional Development Commissioner Daljit Kumar, Joint Commissioner Hemant Sharan, Chief Engineer Vijay Kumar Haridas, Executive Engineer and other concerned officials were present on this occasion.

QUICK READ

Applications open for January 2026 admissions in IGNOU

Vijayapura

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has invited online applications for admission to its January 2026 programs, including undergraduate, postgraduate, and diploma courses. New applicants can submit their forms online through the official portal: https://ignouadmission.samarth.edu.in. The last date to apply is December 31, 2025. For re-registration, applicants can submit their forms via the portal: https://onlineadmission.ignou.ac.in, with the last date being January 15, 2026. Admissions can be completed entirely online through the IGNOU portal. For further information, applicants can contact the Regional Director.

Tehsildar Prashant Z. promotes awareness on child labor

Vijayapura

At a Child Labor Rehabilitation Committee and task force meeting at Vijayapura Tehsildar's office, Tehsildar Prashant Z. highlighted the need for training workshops for newly appointed Inspectors under Sections 16/17, emphasizing periodic surprise inspections with the task force. Over the past three years, 1,370 inspections rescued 22 child and adolescent laborers, with fines of ₹36,000 collected, ₹20,000 deposited into the corpus fund. Officials were urged to enforce laws effectively, promote awareness campaigns, and collaborate to protect children's futures. Labor Inspector Shri Jagadevi Sajjan noted ongoing efforts to eliminate child and adolescent labor, with participation from Labor Department and other taluk-level officials.

Car overturns on the highway, passengers safe

Bidar

A car overturned on the highway after hitting a chameleon; passengers escaped unharmed. The incident occurred on NH-65 near Kaudiyal village in Basavakalyan taluk. A speeding car collided with a crossing bike. In an attempt to avoid the biker, the car hit the divider and flipped over. Fortunately, all four passengers in the car escaped without serious injury. The vehicle was traveling from Humanabad towards Basavakalyan. The overturned car was completely damaged, and the scene was captured on CCTV. Basavakalyan traffic police visited the site and conducted an inspection.

Over 1K alumni reunite at Jabshetti Medical College

Alumni Meet at N.K. Jabshetti Ayurvedic College, Meaningful Reunion by helping underprivileged students said Dr. Balbeer Singh

BIDAR

Life becomes truly meaningful when alumni give back to their alma mater and teachers by supporting underprivileged students—financially, morally, and personally—while contributing to the college's development, said Dr. Balbeer Singh, President of the Alumni Association of N.K. Jabshetti Ayurvedic Medical College and Postgraduate Centre.

He spoke at the alumni reunion and "Pratyudam" program, organized by the college in collaboration with Shri Siddharoodha Charitable Hospital and Research Centre. Dr. Singh emphasized that education is not only for oneself; underprivileged students must also be given opportunities to learn. "Our debt to our teachers and the sacrifices of our parents can only be honored when we ensure that future generations benefit from education. By doing so, the college's reputation flourishes and responsible citizens for a greater India are nurtured," he said.

The event was graced by Pujya Shri Dr. Shivkumar Mahaswamiji, President of Chidambara Educational Trust, who noted that over 1,000 alumni from cities including Bengaluru, Pune, Latur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Warangal attended, demonstrating their affection for the college. "It is heartwarming to reunite after three decades, relive memories, and share mutual greetings," he added.

Chief guests included Prof. Dr. V.S. Patil, Principal and Medical Director, alongside dignitaries from Chidambara Educational Trust and the college, including Matoshree Lakshmidevi, Prabhushetti Mudda, B.G. Shetkari, Madivalappa Gangashetti, Basavaraj Jabshetti, Dr. Anand Jabshetti, Dr. Brahmananda Swami, and others. Hundreds of alumni and students participated, making the reunion a memorable celebration of education, mentorship, and giving back.

'Sports complement life by increasing enthusiasm'

BALKI

Sports pave the way for children's future achievements. By participating in sports, children develop enthusiasm, joy, and energy in life, said Hirematha Samsthana Peethadhipati Guru Basava Pattaddevara.

He spoke during the inauguration ceremony of the school-level annual sports meet, organized by the Hirematha Samsthana Vidyapeetha Trust at the Karadyala Channabasaveshwara Gurukula premises in the taluk, on the occasion of Nadaoja Dr. Basavalinga Pattaddevara Amrit Mahotsava on Wednesday. "In today's modern era, children's mental abilities are increasing, but their physical development is declining. Health issues are affecting children. To overcome these, along with education, children must make it a routine to play whenever they get time," he said.

He also emphasized that children must participate in all school-level sports competitions. They should not worry about winning or losing in games; participation is what matters most.

Dr. Dayananda Gowli, who inaugurated the sports meet, said that participating in sports develops leadership qualities among students. He advised students to reduce excessive mobile usage and take part in sports along with their studies.

> **"We have organized the school-level annual sports meet under the institution on the occasion of Nadaoja Dr. Basavalinga Pattaddevara Amrit Mahotsava. The children who secure the top three positions here will become eligible to participate in inter-school level competitions to be held in January," said**
>
> —Guru Basava Pattaddevara,
> Hirematha Samsthana

Hirematha Samsthana Secretary Mahalinga Swamiji performed the flag hoisting for the sports meet.

Aanadur Swami, President of Vivekananda Charitable Trust, performed the worship of Basava Guru.

Also present at the event were entrepreneur Satish Jeerage, Talawada(K) Development Officer Prabhushetti Kurubakhelgi, youth leader Vishal Atival, Channabasaveshwara Gurukula High School Headmaster Mahesh Maharaj, Physical Director Anil Patil, and Junior Primary School Headmistress Sridevi Kulkarni, among others.

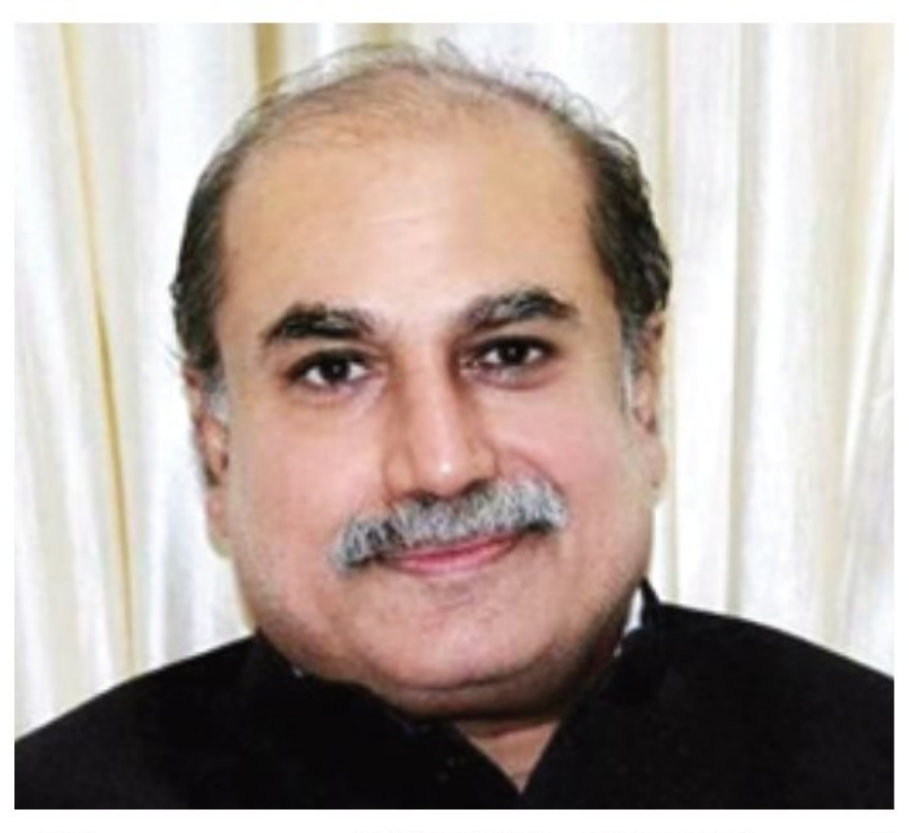
Mahesh Kulkarni welcomed the guests. Lakshmana Metre conducted the anchoring. Mallappa Madar offered the tribute.

₹50 lakh Doddappa Appa scholarship test on Feb 21, 28

BIDAR

The Sharana Basaveshwara Degree College of Science, Commerce, and Arts, near Goranalli in the taluk, has announced the entrance test for the 2026-27 Rs. 50 lakh "Poojya Doddappa Appa Student Scholarship" on February 21 and 28.

According to Basavaraj Deshmukh, Secretary of the Sharana Basaveshwara Vidyarthaka Sangha, Kalaburagi, the test will be conducted in three sessions on both days: 10 AM to 12 PM, 12 PM to 2 PM, and 3 PM to 5 PM.



All students currently studying in 10th grade across all streams (CBSE, ICSE, and State Board) are eligible to take the examination.

Dr. Dakshayini, President of the Sharana Basaveshwara Vidyarthaka Sangha, and Doddappa Appa, 9th Peethadhipati of the Sharana Basaveshwara Institution, have announced that scholarships will be awarded to students who perform well in the test.

The scholarship distribution is as follows:

- Top 15 students: 100% fee waiver
- Next 25 students: 75% fee waiver
- Next 40 students: 50% fee waiver
- Next 50 students: 25% fee waiver
- Next 35 students: 15% fee waiver

Dr. Satish Pratapur, Principal of Sharana Basaveshwara Degree College, urged students to take full advantage of the scholarship entrance examination.

Polio vaccination drive on Dec 21: Tahsildar

LINGSUGUR

A polio vaccination campaign will be launched in the taluk on December 21, and it must be made fully successful, said Tahsildar Satyamma. Speaking at a Task Force Committee meeting held at the tahsil office hall, she stressed that no child should be left without the polio vaccine. She noted that India has not reported a polio case in the last decade. However, since cases have been detected in neighbouring countries, the Central Government has taken the issue seriously. As part of the nationwide polio drive on December 21, a target of 100% coverage has been set, and parents are urged to cooperate.

4,799 road accidents in 10 months; 1,571 people killed

KALABURAGI

Due to overspeeding, careless driving, drunk driving, vehicle defects, poor road conditions and lack of proper training, the number of road accidents in the Kalyana Karnataka region is rising.

According to reports, 4,799 road accidents occurred across seven districts of Kalyana Karnataka between January and October 2025. During this 10-month period, 1,571 people lost their lives, averaging about 157 deaths every month. Another 6,517 people were injured but survived.

Koppal district recorded the highest number of accidents with 1,014 cases. It was followed by Kalaburagi with 954 accidents within the commissionerate and district police limits. Bidar ranked third with 818 accidents, followed by Raichur (736), Ballari (471), Vijayanagara (461) and Yadgir (345).

In terms of fatalities, Kalaburagi district reported the highest number of deaths at 282. Raichur was second with 264 deaths, followed by Bidar (263), Koppal (260), Ballari (181), Vijayanagara (178) and Yadgir (143).

Koppal also recorded the highest number of injuries with 1,407 injured persons, followed by Kalaburagi (1,233), Bidar (1,111), Raichur (936), Vijayanagara (691), Ballari (620) and Yadgir (519).

Residents have urged police to increase night-time checks using breath analysers and strictly punish drunk drivers. They also demanded identification of accident-prone zones and installation of warning boards.

Transport officials said awareness programmes and enforcement have been increased, but public cooperation is lacking. They stressed that following traffic rules and using public transport more often can help reduce accidents.

Kalyana K'taka villages lack bus services due to poor roads

YADGIR

A total of 46 villages, including 45 across seven districts of the Kalyana Karnataka region and one in neighbouring Vijayapura district, still do not have proper roads, preventing buses from operating and forcing residents to depend on private transport.

The Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) provides services in Vijayapura and the districts of Kalaburagi, Bidar, Yadgir, Raichur, Koppal, Ballari and Vijayanagara. Of the 5,283 inhabited villages in this region, 5,237 are connected by bus services, as stated by Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy in a written reply to MLA U.B. Banakar in the Legislative Assembly. The remaining villages remain unconnected due to unsafe road conditions.

In these villages, KKRTC buses run only up to the nearest motorable road, usually about two kilometres away.

Residents must travel the rest of the distance using two-wheelers, autos, tempos, goods vehicles or tractors.

The lack of dependable transport has severely affected students, government employees and daily commuters travelling to taluk and district headquarters. Villagers say repeated appeals to repair roads and extend bus services have gone unanswered. They blame poor construction, rainwater stagnation and damage from overloaded heavy vehicles for the road conditions, which have led to frequent protests demanding reliable bus services.

Villages without bus connectivity

Kalaburagi district:
Kulakunda, Bidarched, Boothanal, Hegganal, Akandahalli

Yadgir district:
Samanapur, Halabavi, Neelakantharayan Doddi, Uppaladinni, Handral (J)

Bidar district:
Mutkhed, Murga, Balur

Koppal district:
Achalapur, Amarapur, Singanagond, Rangapur–Jungli, Yatnatti

Vijayanagara district:
Kanayakanahalli, Honnapur, Srikantapur, Arebasapur, Konanakatte, Tippanayakanahalli, Nagalapur, Animelagere

Ballari district:
Ramghad

Vijayapura district:
Bisanal

₹16 cr ganja, ₹7 cr tobacco seized in 6 months

BIDAR

District police have intensified their fight against ganja cultivation and trafficking and are determined to completely dismantle the network involved in the illegal trade.

According to data from the last six months, between July and mid-December this year, police seized ganja worth ₹16.50 crore and tobacco and narcotic products worth ₹7.50 crore during raids conducted across the district. In connection with these cases, 62 cases were registered, 120 accused were arrested and sent to jail.

One of the biggest seizures took place on November 29 near Rajeshwar in the Basavakalyan Rural Police limits. Police intercepted a Tata goods vehicle transporting ganja worth ₹6.50 crore from Hyderabad to Solapur via Basavakalyan and arrested two people. In another major operation on February 3, police seized 123 kg of ganja worth ₹1.23 crore from a Swift car on the Humnabad National Highway.

Waste negligence triggers public fear of diseases

AFZALPUR

In Afzalpur town, improper garbage collection in several wards by the municipal council has led to waste lying unattended in many places. This has created fear among residents about the spread of diseases and has made it difficult for people to live in a clean and healthy environment.

In the Odder Layout, located behind the government Ayurveda hospital, heaps of garbage dumped in a vacant plot are causing a foul smell. Although the municipality has conducted awareness campaigns saying plastic use is dangerous, plastic usage continues unchecked. Ironically, municipal staff themselves bring food and snacks in plastic covers during lunchtime. Citizens question how those who promote awareness against plastic can openly use it.

The government Ayurveda hospital is located very close to the garbage dump, forcing patients to spend their time in an unhealthy and polluted environment. The waste has led to an increase in mosquitoes, raising the risk of diseases such as dengue and malaria. As a result, local residents are living in constant fear of illness.

The town's population has nearly doubled, and therefore the number of garbage collection vehicles and sanitation workers should also be increased. According to Santosh Chalawadi, president of the Taluk Municipal Employees' Union, 41 sanitation workers and 14 garbage collection vehicles are currently working daily across 23 wards of the town.

Former municipal council members allege that despite having enough sanitation workers, garbage is not being cleared on time due to negligence by senior officials. They warn that poor solid waste management can seriously affect public health and is the main reason for the rise in illnesses among residents.

STRENGTHEN PROTECTION FOR SC/ST

Basava teachings end religious hatred: MLA

BIDAR

The teachings of Mahatma Basava provide a simple yet powerful solution to hatred and conflicts based on caste, religion, or community, said Dr. Shailendra Beldale, MLA of Bidar South.

Speaking during the discussion on the "Karnataka Social Boycott Prohibition, Prevention, and Remedy Bill-2025" in the Belagavi legislative session, introduced by Social Welfare Minister Dr. H.C. Mahadevappa, Dr. Beldale welcomed the bill as a positive step by the government to safeguard the welfare of marginalized communities and curb harmful social boycotts.

He urged that people from all castes, religions, and communities, from villages to Delhi, should live in harmony and cooperation. "Thanks to the constitutional framework established by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, we have reached our current positions. Mahatma Basava's teaching—'Ivanaara, ivanaara endenisdariyya, iva namma va, iva namma va, iva namma mane ya magan endenisdariyya' ('Do not say he is someone else; consider him ours, our own, the son of our home')—if followed by all, caste and religious conflicts will disappear. Hatred will no longer exist," he said, drawing the Assembly's attention.

Dr. Beldale further noted that 33 Civil Rights Enforcement (DCR) police stations have been established across Karnataka to address atrocities against SC/ST communities. While 12 stations already have DYSPs, he urged the government to immediately appoint DYSPs to the remaining 21 stations to ensure swift investigations and strict enforcement.

He emphasized that ministers Dr. Parameshwar, Dr. Mahadevappa, and Priyank Kharge should seriously address this issue to protect marginalized communities.

QUICK READ

Mahaniyar Jayanti preparatory meeting on Dec 20

Chitradurga

A preliminary meeting has been organized on Dec. 20 at the Chitradurga City District Office Hall in connection with the celebration of World Human Day on December 29 at the District Headquarters and the commemoration of Vishwakarma Amarashilpi Jakanachari on January 01, 2026. The preliminary meeting regarding the commemoration of Vishwakarma Amarashilpi Jakanachari will be held on Dec. 20 at 10.30 am and the preliminary meeting regarding World Human Day will be held on Dec. 20 at 11 am under the chairmanship of District Collector T. Venkatesh. All community leaders can attend the meeting and give suggestions, said Dr. B.M. Gurunath, Assistant Director, Department of Kannada and Culture.

Yuvanidhi self-declaration deadline extended till Dec 31

Chitradurga

The process of making Yuvanidhi self-declaration has been extended till the end of December 2025, said District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Authority Chairman R. Shivanna. The beneficiaries of the guarantee scheme Yuvanidhi scheme are being paid through DBT, and it was mandatory for the beneficiaries to self-certify by the 25th of every month for the payment of Yuvanidhi money for the subsequent months. However, before making self-declaration in the month of December 2025, many additional information has to be submitted online on the Seva Sindhu portal, and in this regard, the self-declaration period has been extended till December 31.

DC releases flyer for 24th Kuvempu Drama festival

DC P.N. Ravindra released the promotional flyer for the Kuvempu Drama Festival

CHIKKABALLAPUR

As part of cultural initiatives aimed at promoting Kannada literature and theatre, the flyer for the 24th Kuvempu Drama Festival–2025 was officially released on Thursday by Chikkaballapur District Collector P.N. Ravindra. The event was held at the District Administration Bhavan, marking the formal announcement of the upcoming drama festival scheduled to take place later this month.

The three-day Kuvempu Drama Festival will be organised by the National Award-winning children's organisation Ranga Kahale, Bengaluru, in collaboration with the Department of Kannada and Culture, Bengaluru. The festival will be held at Kannada Bhavan in Chikkaballapur city from December 27 to December 29, with programmes scheduled daily at 6 pm. As part of the festival, audiences will be treated to two stage plays along with short film screenings, offering a blend of theatrical and visual storytelling rooted in literary and social themes.

Speaking on the occasion, officials highlighted the importance of such festivals in preserving and promoting the ideals of Rashtrakavi Kuvempu, one of Karnataka's most celebrated literary figures. The festival aims to bring Kuvempu's universal humanistic message closer to people through meaningful theatrical performances, especially benefiting students, youth, and literature enthusiasts in the district.

Several dignitaries were present during the flyer release ceremony, including Additional District Collector Dr. N. Bhaskar, Sub-Divisional Officer D.H. Ashwin, Kannada Sahitya Parishad District President Dr. Kodirangappa, and Ranga Kahale organisation's convener Ohilesha Lakshmana. They expressed their support for the festival and underlined the role of cultural platforms in strengthening Kannada identity and values.

Ranga Kahale Sanstha has been actively working for over three decades to spread the philosophy, ideals, and universal outlook of Kuvempu through drama and creative performances. The organisation has gained recognition for its consistent efforts in using theatre as a medium for social awareness and literary appreciation, particularly among children and young audiences.

'Centre's interference in Yettinahole unjustified'

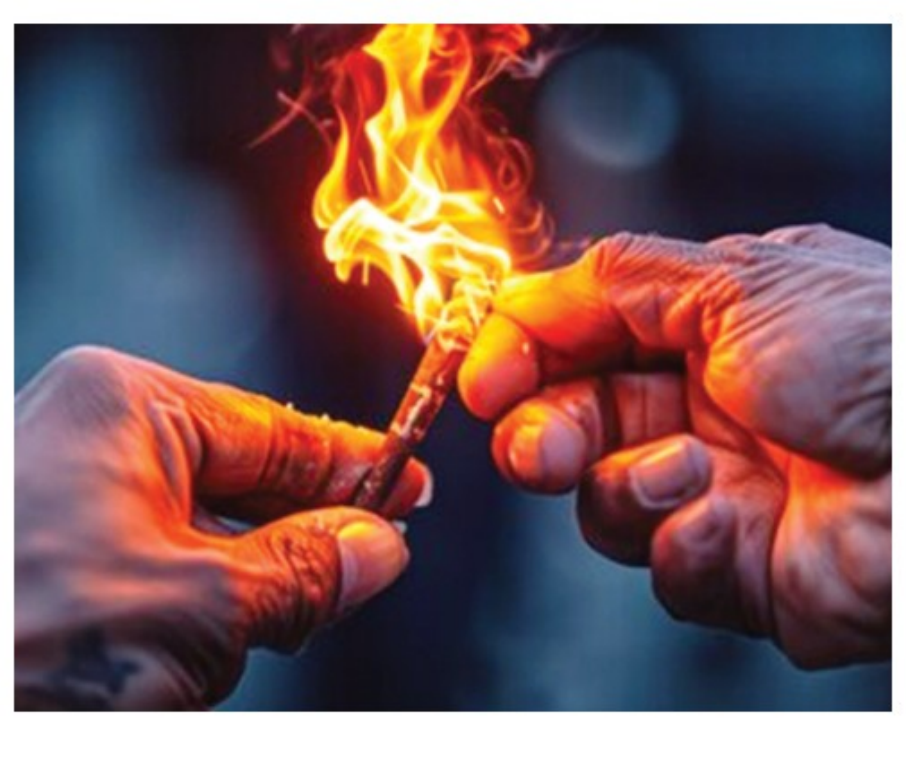
TUMAKURU

TUMUL Director Bharathi has strongly criticised the Central government for not releasing funds for the Yettinahole drinking water project and termed its intervention in the matter as unnecessary and unjustified. Speaking to the media in the city on Thursday, she said the Centre's approach was adversely affecting the interests of Karnataka and its people. Bharathi stated that the Yettinahole project is a crucial initiative aimed at providing drinking water to the water-scarce regions of central and southern Karnataka. Despite its significance, the Central government has failed to extend financial support, causing delays and hardships to lakhs of people who depend on the project for potable water.

A man allegedly poured petrol and set fire to his wife and her family

Man attempts to kill wife and in-laws by setting them ablaze

ATHANI



In a shocking incident that has come to light belatedly, a man allegedly attempted to murder his wife and her family members by pouring petrol and setting them on fire in Telasang village of Athani taluk. The incident reportedly took place on December 10, following prolonged domestic disputes between the couple.

According to police sources, the woman had left her husband's house after repeated quarrels and had gone to stay at her parental home in Telasang village.

Angered by her decision and ongoing family tensions, the husband allegedly went to her parents' house, where he confronted his wife and her family members. During the confrontation, he is said to have poured petrol on them and set them ablaze with the intention of killing them.

The sudden act created panic in the household and surrounding area. Hearing the screams, neighbours rushed to the spot and managed to douse the fire, preventing further loss of life.

The injured victims were immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. Doctors said they sustained burn injuries and are currently undergoing medical care. Their condition is reported to be stable, though they remain under observation.

The incident surfaced after local residents informed the police, following which a case was registered. Police officials have launched an investigation into the matter and are recording statements from the victims, eyewitnesses, and neighbours to ascertain the exact sequence of events. Preliminary findings suggest that domestic discord and anger over the wife leaving the marital home were the main reasons behind the attack.

The accused husband is said to be absconding since the incident, and police teams have been formed to trace and arrest him at the earliest. Authorities have assured strict action against the accused under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, including attempt to murder.

Street play raises awareness on national health programs

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A street play programme was organised at Chikkaballapur KSRTC bus stand to create awareness on national health schemes

In an effort to create public awareness about various national health programmes, a street play was organised at the KSRTC bus stand in Chikkaballapur city. The awareness initiative was jointly undertaken by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the District Health and Family Welfare Department, Chikkaballapur.

The street play programme was presented by the Neha Grameena Abhivruddhi, Cultural and Social Organisation, which used folk theatre and engaging performances to communicate key messages related to public health. The initiative aimed to educate the general public, commuters, and daily wage workers about the importance of national health schemes, preventive healthcare, and the services available through government health programmes. Through the street play, information was disseminated on topics such as maternal and child health, immunisation, sanitation, nutrition, and disease prevention.

The use of simple language, relatable characters, and interactive performances helped attract a large crowd and ensured that the health messages reached people from different sections of society effectively.

District Health Education Officer G. Harish, Taluk Health Officer Dr. Manjula, programme coordinator Deepa, and members of the performing artists' team were present during the event. Health officials appreciated the efforts of the organisation and highlighted the importance of alternative communication methods like street plays in spreading awareness, especially among the public in busy and crowded locations.

Officials stated that such programmes play a crucial role in bridging the information gap and encouraging people to make use of government health services. The district health department plans to continue similar awareness activities across different parts of the district to strengthen public participation in national health initiatives and promote healthier communities.

Report acceptance program with children on December 19

CHITRADURGA

The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Taluk Administration, Taluk Panchayat, School Education and Literacy Department, Women and Child Development Department, Police Department and District Child Protection Unit have jointly organized a Report acceptance program with children on Dec. 19 at 10.30 am at Gurushanteshwara Dasoha Hall, Sirigere, Chitradurga Taluk. Karnataka State Child Rights Protection Commission member Dr. K. T. Thippeswamy will inaugurate the event. Tehsildar P. M. Govinda Raj will preside over the event.

NFSU Dharwad invites applications for Assistant Prof posts

DHARWAD

The National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Dharwad, has issued an official notification inviting applications from eligible and interested candidates for the recruitment of Assistant Professors. This recruitment drive offers a valuable opportunity for job seekers aspiring to build an academic career in the Government of Karnataka, particularly in Dharwad. Eligible candidates must submit their applications online on or before December 28.

According to the notification, a total of five Assistant Professor posts are available at the NFSU Dharwad campus. Selected candidates will be offered a consolidated monthly salary ranging between ₹75,000 and ₹90,000, making the positions financially attractive for qualified professionals in the field of forensic science and allied disciplines.

Candidates applying for the posts must meet the prescribed educational qualifications. As per the official notification, applicants should have completed M.Sc, ME, M.Tech, or Ph.D from a recognised board or university. The university has emphasised that candidates should possess strong academic credentials and relevant subject expertise to be considered for the teaching positions.

In terms of age eligibility, the maximum age limit for applicants has been fixed at 45 years as on December 1, 2025. Candidates exceeding the prescribed age limit will not be eligible to apply for the posts.

The application process includes payment of an application fee. General, OBC, and EWS category candidates are required to pay ₹1,000, while candidates belonging to SC and ST categories need to pay a reduced fee of ₹500. The fee must be paid online during the application process as per the guidelines mentioned in the notification.

Interested candidates are advised to carefully read the complete NFSU recruitment notification before applying. To apply, applicants must visit the official online application link for the NFSU Assistant Professor posts, fill in all required details accurately, and upload scanned copies of necessary certificates and documents along with a recent photograph, if applicable. After completing the form, candidates should pay the applicable application fee and submit the application.

Forest Dept captures tiger with help of tamed elephants

GUNDLUPETE

The Forest Department on Thursday successfully captured a tiger that had been creating fear among villagers in Bommalapura village of Gundlupete taluk in Chamarajanagar district. The big cat, which was reportedly preying on cattle in the forest fringe areas, was trapped using tamed elephants, bringing a sense of relief and safety to the local residents.

According to forest officials, the tiger had been frequently sighted near Bommalapura and surrounding villages, triggering panic among villagers, especially farmers and cattle rearers. The animal was suspected to be responsible for killing and feeding on livestock, prompting the Forest Department to intensify surveillance and initiate a combing operation in the region.

During the operation, officials traced the tiger to a fallow agricultural land near Bommalapura village, where it had reportedly taken shelter. In response, a coordinated tiger capture operation was launched across Bommalapura and Vadevanapura areas. The Forest Department deployed trained personnel along with experienced tamed elephants to ensure the operation was carried out safely.

Tamed elephants Prashanth, Kanjan, and Mast were used in the operation to locate and corner the tiger. After hours of careful maneuvering and monitoring, the forest team successfully subdued and captured the animal without causing harm to villagers or forest staff. The tiger was later shifted to a secure location for further examination and rehabilitation as per wildlife protocols.

Car gutted in fire after engine short circuit

MOLAKALMURU

A car was completely gutted in a fire after a suspected short circuit in the engine while it was moving on a national highway near Tammenahalli village on Thursday morning. The incident occurred around 6 am and caused panic among motorists, though no casualties were reported.

The vehicle, a Renault Triber bearing registration number KA-35 P 4870, belonged to Bhimanagouda, a resident of Swamihalli village in Sandur taluk. According to preliminary information, the car was travelling from Ballari towards Challakere when flames suddenly erupted from the engine compartment.

Noticing smoke and fire, the occupants of the car immediately stopped the vehicle and managed to get out in time, narrowly escaping a major tragedy. Within minutes, the fire intensified and engulfed the entire vehicle, reducing it to ashes before any firefighting assistance could arrive.

Eyewitnesses said the fire spread rapidly, leaving no chance to save the car. Passersby attempted to help by alerting authorities and ensuring that traffic on the highway was temporarily slowed to avoid further mishaps. Fortunately, there were no reports of injuries, as all occupants escaped safely.

Initial assessment suggests that an electrical short circuit in the engine caused the fire. However, officials said a detailed inspection would be required to confirm the exact cause. The incident briefly disrupted traffic movement on the busy stretch of the national highway, but normal flow was restored after the burnt vehicle was cleared from the road.

Local residents and motorists have urged vehicle owners to ensure regular maintenance, especially of electrical systems, to prevent such incidents. Authorities have also advised drivers to immediately stop their vehicles and move to a safe distance if they notice smoke or unusual smells while driving.

ELEPHANT KILLS FARM LABOURER

Wild elephant attack claims life of farm labourer

HANUR

A tragic incident of human–wildlife conflict was reported from the Jallipalya forest area in Hanur taluk, where a wild elephant attack claimed the life of a farm labourer. The deceased has been identified as Shivamoorthy (50), a resident of Makanapalya village in Tamil Nadu.

According to officials, Shivamoorthy was working as a daily wage labourer engaged in banana harvesting in and around the Jallipalya region. After completing his work for the day, he was returning to his native village on a motorcycle when the incident occurred. While passing through the forest stretch late in the evening, a wild elephant suddenly emerged and attacked him, trampling him to death on the spot.

Forest department sources said that after the fatal attack, the elephant herd remained in the area for some time, creating panic among local residents and commuters who use the forest route. The presence of the elephants prevented immediate access to the spot and heightened concerns over further incidents.

On receiving information, officials from the Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Division rushed to the location. Forest personnel from the Hoogyam wildlife range undertook operations to drive the elephant herd away from the area to ensure public safety and to facilitate further proceedings.

The incident has once again highlighted the growing issue of human–elephant conflict in forest fringe areas, especially during evening and night hours when labourers and villagers travel through forest routes.

Local residents have expressed concern over frequent movement of wild elephants in the region and have urged the authorities to take preventive measures to avoid such tragic incidents in the future.

Forest officials have advised people to avoid travelling through forest areas after dark and to remain alert to wildlife movement. Further legal procedures are being carried out, and compensation-related formalities for the victim's family are expected to be initiated as per government norms.

DK Suresh's birthday marked with support to Anganwadi

Congress workers celebrated DK Suresh's birthday meaningfully by extending financial assistance for anganwadi children's uniforms in Bilagumba

RAMANAGARA

Congress leaders and workers in Bilagumba village of Ramanagara taluk marked the 60th birthday of former Member of Parliament and BAMUL President D.K. Suresh in a meaningful manner by extending financial assistance for the distribution of uniforms to anganwadi children. The initiative highlighted a blend of celebration and social responsibility, reflecting the values associated with the senior Congress leader.

As part of the celebrations on Thursday, special prayers were offered at the Sri Basaveshwara Swamy Temple in the village. Following the rituals, party workers cut a cake and shared it among themselves to mark the occasion. The event, however, went beyond festivities, as financial support was provided to facilitate uniform distribution for anganwadi children, drawing appreciation from villagers and local leaders.

Speaking on the occasion, former Taluk Panchayat member Pranesh said that the birthday of former MP and BAMUL President D.K. Suresh was being celebrated in a socially meaningful way by the youth. He prayed for Suresh's good health and long life, expressing hope that he would attain higher political responsibilities and continue serving the people with greater strength and dedication.

Pranesh also recalled the developmental works carried out by D.K. Suresh during his tenure as a Member of Parliament, stating that his contributions to the constituency remain clearly visible. He noted that as BAMUL President, Suresh has taken several progressive and farmer-friendly decisions for the welfare of dairy farmers. He further praised efforts to expand markets for Nandini products beyond the state and at the international level.

Congress Youth Wing district general secretary Santosh said the birthday celebrations were deliberately planned in a purposeful manner. He stated that D.K. Suresh has played a crucial role in building a strong base of young Congress workers and continues to inspire emerging youth leaders within the party.

Vatal Nagaraj slams Belagavi Legislature session

RAMANAGARA

Vatal Nagaraj criticised the Belagavi winter session, alleging it failed to address North Karnataka issues, focusing instead on power politics

Kannada Chaluvali Vatal Paksha president Vatal Nagaraj on Thursday strongly criticised the recently concluded winter session of the Karnataka Legislature held at Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi, alleging that it was reduced to dinner meetings held either in support of or against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. He said the session had completely failed to address the serious and long-pending issues faced by North Karnataka.

Speaking at a symbolic protest organised at Aijoor Circle in Ramanagara, Vatal Nagaraj said leaders across parties repeatedly speak about injustice to North Karnataka, but neither the government nor the opposition shows real political will to ensure the region's comprehensive development. He accused both the ruling party and opposition of neglecting critical regional concerns.

Vatal said the session should have begun with a unanimous resolution focusing on the holistic development of North Karnataka. He stressed that serious discussions were required on irrigation, education, infrastructure, transport facilities, border disputes, and other pressing problems. After such discussions, the government should have committed to releasing funds within a fixed timeline and initiating concrete action. None of this happened. The session has been a complete failure, he alleged.

He further claimed that the Belagavi session was dominated by debates around the Chief Minister's post rather than governance. According to him, one set of dinner meetings was held to ensure Siddaramaiah continued as Chief Minister, while another was allegedly aimed at removing him. This controversy must be brought to an end, he said.

At the same time, Vatal Nagaraj strongly defended Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, describing him as a mature, experienced, and progressive thinker with a strong political background. He said Siddaramaiah stands out as one of the most seasoned leaders not only in Karnataka but also compared to neighbouring states.

QUICK READ

Applications invited for teacher posts

Chitradurga

Pre-primary classes (LKG-UKG) are being started from the 2025-26 academic year at Ramgiri Government Model Higher Primary School in Holalkere taluk. In this regard, applications have been invited from local candidates for temporary recruitment of qualified teachers and respective posts. The last date for submitting applications is December 28. The minimum educational qualification for Pre-Primary Teachers is as follows. PUC should have 50% marks in undergraduate education. Diploma in Nursery or B.Ed (Nursery) Teachers Education/Free-School Teacher Education or B.D. Nursery from an institution recognized by NCTE. Or if candidates who have undergone pre-primary teacher training are not available.

'Bal Bhavan is an inspiration for mental development'

CHITRADURGA

Teacher Ajjappa Moti said that Bal Bhavan is an inspiration for mental development along with entertainment. He was speaking after inaugurating the art talent program organized by the Rajya Bal Bhavan Society, Zilla Panchayat, Women and Child Development Department, Zilla Bal Bhavan Committee, and Taluk Bal Bhavan Committee at Karnataka Public School in Kashipur, Holalkere taluk. He said that organizing mental development activities along with entertainment for children and doing activities that help children in their education is a good development.

EduCare School's 'Young Mind Expo' draws wide appreciation

KOPPAL

The Young Mind Expo organised by EduCare English Medium School at Channabasava Nagar in Koppal drew special attention for its focus on scientific thinking, creativity, and experiential learning among students. The exhibition was inaugurated by Deputy Director of the Department of School Education and Literacy, Somashekaragouda B., who underlined the importance of science exhibitions in enhancing children's intellectual abilities.

Speaking on the occasion, Somashekaragouda said that science exhibitions contribute more to children's overall development than routine annual day celebrations. He emphasised that such platforms encourage curiosity, innovation, and independent thinking, which are crucial for a child's academic and personal growth. He added that children's educational progress largely depends on their learning habits and self-motivation, and early exposure to science and technology is essential in today's fast-evolving world.

He praised EduCare English Medium School for providing quality education supported by good infrastructure, including a spacious playground and well-designed buildings, creating a conducive learning environment. He also appreciated the school's approach of not limiting students to textbook education alone but encouraging them to pursue extracurricular interests such as sports, music, karate, dance, and drawing in a structured manner, calling it a model for other institutions to follow.

The exhibition showcased a wide range of student-prepared models and presentations that reflected rural life and traditional practices. Displays included models depicting rural household setups, traditional ornaments, bullock carts, cattle and poultry farming, well-water extraction methods, grinding and pounding techniques, vegetable cultivation, food markets, and artistic presentations of Karnataka's heritage. Special attention was drawn to pictorial explanations of state landmarks and tourist destinations from across the district.

'Sushasan Saptah' campaign in district from December 19

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Following the directions of the Government of India's Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Chikkaballapur district will observe Sushasan Saptah – Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore from December 19 to 25. The week-long campaign aims to strengthen good governance and bring administrative services closer to the public. Special camps and programmes will be organised across all taluks by central and state government departments to address grievances, improve service delivery, and ensure effective implementation of schemes. A workshop promoting public participation in governance will be held on December 23 at 11 am in the District Panchayat auditorium. District Collector P.N. Ravindra urged citizens to participate and provide suggestions to enhance transparency, accountability, and administrative efficiency.

Chitradurga Tahsildar Govindaraj directed officials to ensure effective implementation of Pulse Polio vaccination programme across taluk

Pulse Polio program must be implemented effectively: Tahsildar

CHITRADURGA

Tahsildar Govindaraj has instructed officials to ensure the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Pulse Polio vaccination programme in both urban and rural areas of Chitradurga taluk. He was speaking while presiding over the Taluk Pulse Polio Task Force Committee meeting held at the Tahsildar's office on Thursday.

The Tahsildar said the Pulse Polio immunisation drive will be conducted from December 21 to 24 and emphasised that no child below the age of five should be left unvaccinated. He directed officials to take all necessary steps to ensure complete coverage and to closely monitor the programme's execution.

To strengthen public participation, Govindaraj instructed officials to organise awareness rallies at the school level and to use audio jingles through city municipal waste collection vehicles to spread awareness about the importance of the Pulse Polio programme. He stressed that awareness activities should reach every household to ensure maximum turnout at vaccination booths.

Addressing the meeting, Chitradurga Taluk Health Officer Dr. B.V. Girish said that under the National Pulse Polio Programme, all children below five years of age will be administered two drops of the polio vaccine. He clarified that even children who have received the vaccine earlier must be given two drops again during this round to ensure continued protection against polio. He called for collective cooperation from all departments and the public to maintain India's polio-free status.

Dr. Girish informed the committee that Chitradurga taluk has an estimated population of 4,71,280, spread across 1,07,479 households. A total of 34,603 children under the age of five have been identified as the target group for vaccination. To achieve this, 277 vaccination booths will be set up, supported by 60 supervisors and 584 vaccination workers.

Swamiji demands Chief Minister post for G. Parameshwara

TUMAKURU

Hanumanthanath Mahaswamiji has demanded that senior Congress leader and former Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara be given the post of Chief Minister, stating that his experience, administrative capability, and commitment to social justice make him a deserving leader for the position.

Addressing a gathering in Tumakuru, the seer said Dr. Parameshwara has served the state with dedication and has consistently worked for the welfare of marginalised communities. He pointed out that Dr. Parameshwara's long political journey, coupled with his clean image and administrative acumen, qualifies him to lead Karnataka at a crucial time.

Hanumanthanath Mahaswamiji noted that Dr. Parameshwara has held several key positions, including Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister, and has gained vast experience in governance. According to the seer, such experience should be recognised and utilised in the interest of the state's development. He added that leadership should be entrusted to those who have proven their ability to handle responsibility and maintain stability.

The seer also emphasised that appointing Dr. Parameshwara as Chief Minister would send a strong message of inclusiveness and social harmony. He said that Dr. Parameshwara has always stood for constitutional values and democratic principles, earning respect across communities and political circles.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MUJEEB MAHMADHUSEN DOTIHAL**, S/o. Mahmadhusen Resident of No. 5, Azad Nagar Hunagund Bagalkot 587118 have changed my name to **MUJEEB DOTIHAL** Vide Affidavit Dated: 16.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **JAYRAJ**, residing at No.100, Vinayaka Street, Venkateshpuram, Bengaluru-560045, have changed my name to **JAYARAJ**, vide affidavit dated: 17.12.2025, before Notary N.NAGAPPA, Bangalore

NAME CHANGE

I, **MUSTAFA TAHER GANGLY**, Resident of No. F-102 Babji 53 Bohra Layout Opp to Fakhri Medical Gottigere, Bengaluru-560083 have changed my son name from **ABDEALI MUSTAFA** to **ABDEALI MUSTAFA GANGLY**, Vide Affidavit Dated: 16.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **HARSHITA BHANDARI MAHENDRA KUMAR**, W/o. Ankith Kumar Jain Resident of No.23, 4th Cross, West Link Road Malleswaram Bengaluru-560003, have changed my name to **HARSHITA BHANDARI,** Vide Affidavit Dated: 18.12.2025 before notary V.RAJASHEKHARA Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **PRASANNA**, S/O Sri Krishnappa, aged 45 years, residing at Ujjani Hosahalli, Sasalu Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District, Karnataka – 561203, my daughter's name was wrongly mentioned as **MAYTHREE** in her school records. Her correct name is MYTHRI, and my wife name is SUSHMA as entered in service records at the time of marriage. But her correct name is **SUSHMA KUSUMA**, as mentioned in her Aadhaar card. I swear this affidavit to confirm the correct names of my wife and daughter. This affidavit is submitted to the concerned authorities for correction of my wife's and daughter's names in official records. I declare that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. vide affidavit dated: 31.05.2025, before Notary B.K.G.RAJU, Doddaballapura

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PRAKASH N S S/o N H SHANKARAPPA, R/o Nittur Hobali Gubbi Taluk, Nittur At Post, Nittur, Gubbi, Tumakuru, Karnataka – 572223, have changed the name of my minor son MADAN KUMAR N P aged 16 years and he shall hereafter be known as PAVAN KUMAR N P.

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SKILL DEVELOPMENT CRUCIAL

Skill devpt essential to succeed in world: Experts

TUMAKURU

Emphasising the growing importance of skill development in today's competitive world, experts said students must equip themselves with industry-relevant competencies to excel in the fields of electrical and electronics engineering. The views were expressed during the inauguration of the IEEE Power Electronics Society at Sri Siddhartha Institute of Technology (SSIT), Tumakuru.

Addressing students at the inaugural programme, Dr. Prema, Chair of the IEEE Electronics Society, Bengaluru Section, and Assistant Professor in the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, said the demand for electrical and electronic applications has increased significantly across the globe. Electricity has become an essential part of daily life. Continuous research and innovation in this field are leading to new technologies that are transforming the world, she said.

She pointed out that the electrical and electronics sector will generate numerous opportunities in the coming years. However, she cautioned that students can survive and succeed in the competitive environment only by acquiring the right professional skills. Dr. Prema added that IEEE has been actively working to support students through technical platforms, research exposure, and innovation-driven activities.

As part of the programme, the IEEE Power Electronics Society was formally inaugurated under the SSIT IEEE Student Branch. A Power Tech competition was also organised, drawing enthusiastic participation from engineering students across Karnataka.

A total of 42 teams took part in the competition, including 31 teams from 13 different engineering colleges. Participating institutions included SSIT Tumakuru, MIT, SIT, BNMIT, CIT, PES Mandya, SJSSST, Cambridge, BGS, Malnad College, Venkateshwara College, Nitte Meenakshi, and Don Bosco Institute. Each team presented an individual project as part of the competition, showcasing innovation and practical application of engineering concepts.

In the competition results, SSIT Tumakuru bagged the first prize, while the Royal Institute of Technology, Mysuru, secured the second prize. SSIT Tumakuru also won the third prize, underlining the institution's strong technical foundation.

QUICK READ

Government to check airline opportunistic pricing

New Delhi
Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu told the Lok Sabha that the government steps in to control airfares during extraordinary situations when airlines raise prices unfairly. He said such action was taken during the Covid pandemic, the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, and the recent IndiGo crisis. The ministry monitors routes to keep fares affordable and caps prices on UDAN routes. IndiGo cancellations earlier this month stranded thousands of passengers.

Rohingya youth killed in drunken brawl

Hyderabad
A 19-year-old Rohingya man was stabbed to death after a drunken fight at a camp in Balapur, police said on Thursday. The incident took place around 1.30 am on December 17. The accused, also a Rohingya, allegedly attacked the victim with a knife and stabbed him 19 times, killing him on the spot. Police reached the scene after receiving information. An autopsy confirmed multiple stab injuries. The suspect has been taken into custody and a murder case registered.

Man arrested for killing parents

Jaunpur
Police have arrested a man for allegedly killing his elderly parents in Ahmadpur village over family disputes. The accused, Ambesh, reportedly attacked his mother with a pestle on December 8. When his father tried to intervene, he was struck and later strangled. Police said the bodies were cut into pieces with a saw and dumped into the Gomti river. The crime came to light after the sisters filed a complaint. All materials were recovered and the accused was jailed.

Modi to address closing ceremony of WHO's Global Summit in New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to highlight India's role in global traditional medicine efforts at the second WHO Global Summit

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the closing ceremony of the second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine in New Delhi on December 19, according to the Prime Minister's Office. The three day summit is being held at Bharat Mandapam and highlights India's growing leadership in building a science based and people centred traditional medicine system across the world.

The Prime Minister's Office said Modi has always stressed the need to bring traditional medicine and Indian knowledge systems into the mainstream through research, standard rules, and cooperation. The summit reflects these efforts and shows India's role in shaping future health systems.

During the programme, Modi will launch several major Ayush initiatives. These include the My Ayush Integrated Services Portal, a single digital platform for Ayush services. He will also unveil the Ayush Mark, which aims to become a quality standard for Ayush products and services.

The Prime Minister is also expected to release a WHO technical report on training in Yoga and a book titled "From Roots to Global Reach: 11 Years of Transformation in Ayush". He will release a special postal stamp on Ashwagandha, highlighting India's traditional medicinal heritage.

Modi will felicitate the winners of the Prime Minister's Awards for Outstanding Contribution to the Promotion and Development of Yoga for the years 2021 to 2025. These awards recognise long term dedication to Yoga and its spread worldwide.

The Prime Minister will also visit the Traditional Medicine Discovery Space, an exhibition showing traditional medicine knowledge from India and other countries.

The summit, held from December 17 to 19, is organised by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Ayush. It focuses on restoring balance through health, science, and well being, with discussions among international leaders, scientists, practitioners, and civil society representatives.

Raut warns NCP (SP) against Ajit Pawar alliance

MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut warns NCP (SP) that joining Ajit Pawar-led NCP is like supporting BJP in civic polls

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday warned that if the NCP (SP) aligns with the Ajit Pawar-led NCP for the Pune Municipal Corporation elections, it would be equivalent to joining hands with the BJP. Speaking to reporters, Raut said he plans to meet NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar to discuss several issues, including the possibility of any understanding between the two NCP factions for the civic body polls.

"Having an alliance with Ajit Pawar would be akin to joining hands with the BJP. Ajit Pawar is an agent of the BJP, and any deal with him will strengthen the BJP," Raut said.

The NCP and NCP (SP) have held talks about a potential alliance for the Pune civic elections. Earlier this week, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis stated that the BJP and NCP will not have an alliance in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad municipal corporations, resulting in a friendly contest between the two Mahayuti allies.

The ruling Mahayuti alliance includes the BJP and Shiv Sena, now led by Deputy CM Eknath Shinde. Raut also noted that Sharad Pawar is positive about Uddhav Thackeray's Sena (UBT) and the Raj Thackeray-led Maharash tra Navnirman Sena coming together for the civic polls. He said NCP (SP) will ally with Sena (UBT) and MNS in Nashik and Thane.

Raut claimed that Shiv Sena's budget for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections is around Rs 10,000 crore, with Rs 10 crore planned for each candidate, though no details were provided. Elections to 29 municipal corporations in the state are scheduled for January 15, with counting set for the next day.

AAP sweeps Punjab local polls, leads Panchayat Samiti

CHANDIGARH

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party registered a sweeping victory in Punjab's rural local body elections, winning more than 200 zones of the zila parishad and leading in most panchayat samiti zones, according to results declared on Thursday.

Polling was held on December 14 to elect members for 347 zones of 22 zila parishads and 2,838 zones of 153 panchayat samitis. Officials said counting of ballot papers was still underway and final results awaited.

So far, results for 317 zila parishad zones have been declared, with AAP winning 201 zones. The Congress secured 60 zones, Shiromani Akali Dal 39, BJP four, BSP three, and Independents 10.

AAP recorded major gains across districts, winning 22 zones in Hoshiarpur, 19 each in Amritsar and Patiala, 17 each in Tarn Taran and Gurdaspur, and 15 in Sangrur. Congress performed better in Gurdaspur and Ludhiana with eight zones each, while SAD led in Bathinda with 13 zones.

In the panchayat samiti elections, AAP was leading in a majority of zones as counting continued statewide.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said the results showed strong support for the Bhagwant Mann government's work in rural Punjab. Addressing media with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in Mohali, he rejected opposition claims of unfair practices and said the polls were free and fair.

However, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring alleged that the elections were "stolen" and accused the ruling party of misusing official machinery. Opposition parties Congress and SAD have raised allegations of high handedness during the polls.

Kerala DIG booked for alleged bribery in prisons

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Thursday registered a case against Deputy Inspector General of Prisons, M K Vinod Kumar, for allegedly demanding and accepting bribes from prisoners and their relatives.

VACB officials said the case was registered under Sections 7A and 7B of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which deal with corrupt influence on public servants and accepting undue advantage or bribes. The case followed a tip-off alleging that Kumar accepted money to sanction parole or other jail facilities.

Preliminary investigation revealed that payments were made through UPI transactions into the accounts of Kumar's relatives. Officials also noted involvement of a relative of notorious criminal Kodi Suni, accused in the 2012 murder of RMP leader TP Chandrasekharan.

The probe team is collecting details from prison department officials and reviewing bank statements and transaction records of Kumar and his relatives. VACB officials said Kumar will be interrogated soon as part of the ongoing investigation.

Meanwhile, a report has been submitted to the state government recommending Kumar's suspension until the probe is completed. Authorities said allowing him to continue at the Prison headquarters could affect the investigation.

VACB also indicated that a further probe would examine whether Kumar accumulated wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income. Officials emphasized that the inquiry aims to ensure accountability in the prison department and uphold integrity in public service.

Consensus reached on appointments of VC's for Kerala varsities

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday was informed that the Kerala governor and state government have agreed on names for the appointment of vice chancellors of A P J Abdul Kalam Technological University and Kerala University of Digital Sciences. Attorney General R Venkataramani, representing the governor, told the bench that the matter is resolved and communicated to the committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Sudhanshu Dhulia.

The court noted that universities cannot function without vice chancellors, who play a key role in administration. The bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan appreciated the timely resolution, saying the intervention protected citizens' rights and ended a prolonged deadlock.

Justice Dhulia's committee was tasked with recommending at least three names for each university, and both the governor and state government have now reached consensus on appointments. The court praised all authorities involved, including the attorney general and senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, for bringing a satisfactory conclusion.

The deadlock between Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Governor-cum-Chancellor Rajendra Arlekar had delayed the appointments. The apex court had earlier warned it would intervene if no consensus was reached. It also expressed displeasure when the Dhulia Committee's report was initially overlooked.

The Supreme Court appointed Justice Dhulia in August to shortlist names and asked the parties to find a harmonious mechanism. With the consensus now achieved, the top court noted that the interests of all stakeholders have been safeguarded, and the universities will now have permanent vice chancellors in place to ensure smooth functioning.

NCP not excluded from Mahayuti civic polls: Tatkare

MUMBAI

Maharashtra NCP chief Sunil Tatkare on Thursday clarified that no BJP leader has stated that the NCP will be excluded from the Mahayuti alliance for upcoming civic elections. Speaking after a strategy meeting led by Deputy CM and NCP chief Ajit Pawar, Tatkare said discussions focused on the local body polls and coordination within the coalition.

The Mahayuti alliance includes BJP, NCP, and Shiv Sena (Shinde faction). Responding to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's remark that BJP and NCP would contest Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad polls separately, Tatkare said these cities do not represent the entire state. He noted that contesting together in these strongholds could give an advantage to opposition parties and affect party workers' morale.

Tatkare also addressed BJP's objections to NCP leader Nawab Malik in Mumbai, saying he has been appointed to manage the party's internal election committee there. He added that while he oversees talks with allies as state unit chief, Ajit Pawar and Pratik Patel will step in when necessary.

Elections to 29 municipal corporations in Maharashtra are scheduled for January 15, with counting on January 16. Tatkare said the nomination process has not yet begun and results from municipal council and nagar panchayat polls will guide the party's final strategies.

He emphasized that NCP remains an active and integral partner in the Mahayuti alliance and that preparations for the civic polls are ongoing.

Vijay labels DMK as 'evil force' ahead of 2026 polls

ERODE

Actor-politician Vijay on Thursday launched a strong attack on Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK, calling it an "evil force," a term once used by late AIADMK leaders M G Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa. Speaking at a public meeting here, he described his Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) as a "pure force," framing the 2026 electoral contest as a battle between the two parties.

This marked Vijay's first public outreach in Tamil Nadu after the tragic Karur rally on September 27, where a stampede claimed 41 lives. Since then, he had addressed a closed-door meeting in Kancheepuram and a rally in nearby Puducherry.

Vijay referred to late Chief Ministers MGR and Jayalalithaa, saying they often described DMK as "theeya sakthi" (evil force). "The contest is now between the thooya sakthi TVK and theeya sakthi DMK," he asserted, hinting at the upcoming assembly elections. He also alleged a smear campaign against him by vested interests and defended his use of references to the late CMs, stating their legacy belongs to everyone.

Vijay criticized the DMK government on law and order and agricultural issues. He also highlighted party expansion, noting that local leaders, such as former AIADMK strongman K A Sengottaiyan who recently joined TVK, would be welcomed and given recognition.

CLEAN TRANSPORT

Delhi CM pushes for electric bus fleet plan

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday announced a plan to make the Delhi Transport Corporation fleet fully electric by next year, aiming to turn public transport completely emission free. She launched 100 new electric buses and said the move is part of long term efforts to control pollution in the capital.

The Chief Minister said the government is focused on practical and lasting solutions to improve air quality. Adding electric buses to the DTC fleet will help cut emissions and improve daily travel for passengers across the city.

Gupta also announced the launch of an interstate electric bus service from Dhaula Kuan in Delhi to Dharuhera in Haryana. She said the service, closed for many years, has now been restarted with modern buses offering better comfort and safety.

She said the new service will reduce pollution and make travel easier for people commuting between Delhi and the National Capital Region. Clean public transport, she added, is key to managing traffic and pollution together.

Earlier, the Chief Minister said Delhi recorded zero incidents of stubble burning during winter, calling it a major success of the pollution control policy. She said paddy was cultivated on nearly 7,000 acres in 2025, yet no stubble burning cases were reported.

Gupta said the achievement came through joint efforts of departments, strict monitoring, and cooperation from farmers. The government plans to strengthen these measures further in coming months across the city, officials said.

'She can go to hell': Giriraj Singh backs Nitish

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Thursday strongly defended Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over a controversial incident in Patna in which the Chief Minister pulled down the veil of a Muslim woman doctor at a public appointment ceremony, triggering widespread criticism.

Responding to the backlash, Singh asserted that Nitish Kumar had "done nothing wrong" and described the Chief Minister's actions as those of a "guardian." Referring to the incident involving a newly recruited AYUSH doctor, Singh questioned the appropriateness of covering one's face while receiving an official appointment letter. "If someone is coming to collect an appointment letter, should they not show their face? Is this an Islamic country?" he asked, adding that India functions under the rule of law.

Singh went on to draw comparisons with identity verification at airports and passport offices, arguing that showing one's face is a routine requirement. When asked about reports suggesting that the doctor had declined to take up the job due to trauma caused by the incident, the minister made a sharp remark, saying that whether she refused the job or "went to hell" was her personal choice.

The comments came as Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey said he had no information about the doctor rejecting the appointment and attempted to justify Nitish Kumar's conduct by highlighting the Chief Minister's record on women's empowerment.

The incident occurred on Monday when Nusrat Parveen, a doctor from Kolkata, was among ten AYUSH doctors receiving appointment letters at the Chief Minister's Secretariat. As she approached the stage, the 75-year-old Chief Minister reportedly questioned her veil before pulling it down.

Opposition leaders across parties condemned Singh's remarks, calling them offensive and insensitive. Congress MP Tariq Anwar described Singh as having a "cheap mentality," while PDP leader Iltija Mufti and NCP (SP) MP Fauzia Khan also strongly criticised both the incident and the subsequent defence of it.

QUICK READ

Udhayanidhi criticises Palaniswami over laptop scheme

Chennai
Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Thursday criticised AIADMK leader Edappadi K Palaniswami for questioning the state's free laptop scheme. Udhayanidhi accused Palaniswami of trying to undermine a programme aimed at helping college students. Referring to Palaniswami's remarks on the timing of laptop distribution, he sarcastically said the leader had suddenly become a "computer expert," adding that he had previously thought Palaniswami was only a Tamil scholar familiar with 'Kamba Ramayanam'.

Maharashtra Minister Kokate resigns after court verdict

Mumbai
Nationalist Congress Party minister Manikrao Kokate has resigned from the Maharashtra Cabinet after a court upheld his conviction and two-year jail term in a cheating and forgery case. NCP president and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said Kokate's resignation letter, after being removed from all portfolios on Wednesday, has been sent to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Pawar added that the party respects the supremacy of law over individuals.

Delhi police files 45 FIRs over child abuse

New Delhi
Delhi Police registered 45 FIRs in November and December following cyber tip-offs about the online circulation of child sexual abuse material. The Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC) handled the cases, acting on reports from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children via the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal. Authorities said the FIRs were lodged promptly after receiving these cyber alerts.

India, Netherlands sign letter of intent on defence cooperation

Rajnath Singh, Dutch foreign minister reaffirm defence ties, discuss co-production, security cooperation and Indo-Pacific partnership during high-level talks in Delhi

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met Netherlands' Foreign Minister David Van Weel in New Delhi on Thursday, reaffirming the strong and growing defence partnership between the two countries. The meeting focused on enhancing cooperation in security and defence, as well as exploring opportunities for co-development and co-production of defence equipment.

According to the Ministry of Defence, both ministers emphasised the importance of military-to-military cooperation, making defence collaboration a key part of their strategic partnership. They highlighted the shared commitment of India and the Netherlands to a free, open, inclusive, and rule-based Indo-Pacific region. The ministers also discussed connecting the defence industries of both countries, especially in niche technologies.

During the visit, a Letter of Intent on Defence Cooperation was exchanged between Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and the Netherlands' Ambassador to India, Marisa Gerards, in the presence of the two ministers. The agreement aims to explore defence collaboration in identified areas, develop a Defence Industrial Roadmap, and promote co-production and co-development of defence platforms and equipment for mutual benefit.

Rajnath Singh also pointed out the strong people-to-people ties, noting the large Indian diaspora in the Netherlands as a bridge strengthening friendship between the two nations.

David Van Weel arrived in India earlier in the day and will engage in discussions in both Delhi and Mumbai to further deepen bilateral relations. The Ministry of External Affairs said his visit aims to diversify and strengthen India-Netherlands ties.

This high-level visit comes ahead of the scheduled visit of Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof to India in February next year, signalling continued efforts to enhance collaboration between the two nations in multiple sectors, including defence and technology.

Union Min Amit Shah to visit West Bengal on Dec 29-30

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit West Bengal on December 29-30 to review BJP's election strategy, assess organisational strength, and strengthen coordination ahead of 2026 Assembly polls

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is set to visit West Bengal on December 29 and 30, with his two-day stay in Kolkata focusing on reviewing the BJP's readiness for upcoming Assembly elections. According to party sources, Shah will meet the state BJP's core group leaders to discuss booth-level planning, organisational strength, and coordination among party leaders.

The visit is seen as a major step in the BJP's renewed focus on West Bengal. The central leadership aims to strengthen its electoral strategy ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections. The meetings will help assess the party's preparedness and guide local leaders on election management and campaigning.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also visit West Bengal on December 20. During his visit, he will address a rally in Taherpur, Nadia district. Modi's visit comes amid opposition from Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll.

Senior BJP leader and West Bengal Assembly Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari recently criticised TMC, asserting that the BJP relies on transparent electoral practices and does not use fake, dead, or illegal voters. He said the SIR has exposed longstanding irregularities in the voter list.

The Election Commission of India has completed the SIR process in preparation for the next Assembly elections, expected in March-April 2026. The draft electoral rolls show that around 58.2 lakh names, or 7.59 per cent of the total electorate, have been provisionally deleted due to death, migration, or untraceability. Eligible voters whose names are missing can request inclusion during the claims and objections period.

The Home Minister's visit underscores the BJP's intent to strengthen its organisational presence and electoral strategy in the politically crucial state.

General Dwivedi presented the 'IKIGAI' Framework at the 3rd Land Forces Summit, enhancing Indo-Pacific military cooperation

Dwivedi outlines IKIGAI framework to deepen Indo-Pacific cooperation

NEW DELHI

Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday addressed the 3rd Land Forces Summit hosted by the Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF), presenting the 'IKIGAI' Framework to enhance cooperation among Indo-Pacific land forces. The summit was attended virtually by army chiefs and senior military leaders from Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and the United States.

General Dwivedi outlined the 'IKIGAI' Framework as a structured roadmap to strengthen interoperability, cooperation, and collective preparedness among regional armies. The framework is built on six key pillars: 'I' for Interoperability and Information Sharing, 'K' for Knowledge and Professional Military Education, 'I' for International Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, 'G' for Generative Technological Partnerships, 'A' for Assurance for Security Partnerships, and 'I' for Integrated Logistics and Sustainment.

He also highlighted three convergence pillars essential for effective collaboration: Shared Diagnosis, Shared Principles, and Shared Actions. The CDS emphasised that the framework reflects a shared purpose among participating nations to harness collective land power for regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

The Land Forces Summit provides a vital platform for senior leadership engagement and structured dialogue, helping nations understand each other's military capabilities and foster Army-to-Army cooperation. General Dwivedi's address aimed to strengthen multilateral collaboration and ensure regional forces are prepared to respond collectively to challenges.

The Government of Japan explains that 'ikigai' represents a passion that brings value and joy to life. In the military context, the framework encourages nations to find shared purpose, leveraging land forces cooperation to achieve mutual benefits for regional security and development.

WB will lead the world, fake news cant defame it: Mamata Banerjee

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday defended the state against criticism, saying attempts to defame Bengal will fail and highlighting its economic and cultural growth. She asserted that negative narratives circulating on social media are fake and aimed at tarnishing the state's image.

"Some people want to defame Bengal, but they don't know how much the state has changed. Bengal is now a leading logistics hub and serves as a gateway to South East Asia, East India, and the North Eastern states. It is surrounded by border states like Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha," Banerjee said.

The Chief Minister highlighted the state's economic initiatives, including allotting 350 acres in Uttarpara, Hooghly district, to Umesh Choudhary for wagon manufacturing. She also pointed out that West Bengal has become the second-largest tourist destination in India and praised the government's efforts to provide 16 lakh bicycles annually to Class 9 government school students.

On cultural and religious projects, Banerjee announced the Durgangan foundation stone program on December 29 at Rajarhat and confirmed the setup of a trust for Mahakal Mandir in Siliguri.

Sculptor Ram Sutar, designer of Statue Unity, dies

NEW DELHI

Renowned sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar, the visionary behind the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, passed away at his residence in Noida at the age of 100 due to age-related ailments. His death marks the end of an era in Indian monumental art.

Condolences poured in from across the country, with President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying tribute. Leaders and cultural institutions called his passing an irreplaceable loss to India's artistic heritage. Sutar is survived by his family and a legacy that continues to define India's public spaces.

Born on February 19, 1925, in Gondur village, Dhule district, Maharashtra, Sutar rose from humble beginnings to become India's most influential public sculptor. Trained at Mumbai's Sir J.J. School of Art, he graduated as a gold medallist and dedicated over seven decades to sculpting figures representing India's political, cultural, and historical identity.

His most celebrated work, the Statue of Unity, stands 182 metres tall in Kevadia, Gujarat, as the world's tallest statue. Sutar personally oversaw every artistic detail, ensuring realism in Patel's posture, expression, and attire, symbolising leadership and resolve. Inaugurated in 2018, the statue has become a national landmark and major tourism hub.

Beyond the Statue of Unity, Sutar created iconic sculptures including Mahatma Gandhi outside Parliament, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Parliament House, and statues of B.R. Ambedkar and V.D. Savarkar. His works are noted for dignity, balance, and emotional restraint.

Honoured with the Padma Shri in 1999, Padma Bhushan in 2016, and Maharashtra Bhushan, Sutar leaves behind a body of work that immortalises India's history and values, ensuring his artistic vision will be remembered for generations.

Dense fog hits Delhi NCR flights, roads disrupted

NEW DELHI

Dense fog covered large parts of Delhi-NCR on Thursday morning, reducing visibility and causing disruptions in road traffic and air travel. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense fog conditions were recorded at 6 am. Visibility dropped sharply to 150 metres at Palam Airport and 200 metres at Safdarjung Airport.

The low visibility affected road traffic across the region, including major routes connecting Delhi with Gurugram, Noida, and Ghaziabad. Commuters faced delays as vehicles moved slowly while drivers exercised caution. At Indira Gandhi International Airport, Palam, visibility was reported at 100 metres, expected to improve to 150 metres within 30 minutes. Due to dense fog, Delhi Airport operated under CAT III conditions, leading to flight disruptions. As many as 27 flights were cancelled—16 departures and 11 arrivals—while several others faced delays. Airport authorities urged passengers to check the latest flight status before travelling. Air India and IndiGo issued advisories for passengers, warning that fog might affect flight schedules over the next few days.

METRO MUSEUM

Delhi metro museum now open at Supreme Court station

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has shifted its popular Metro Museum to the Supreme Court Metro Station. The museum, which showcases the history of Delhi Metro from its inception to present-day operations, will open to the public from Friday, December 19. The inauguration was held on Wednesday by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Minister Pankaj Singh, and DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar.

Previously located at Patel Chowk Metro Station, the museum now offers a larger and more accessible venue for visitors. Spread over approximately 12,000 square feet, the museum has been designed to match the standards of leading Metro museums worldwide. Its location on the Blue Line makes it convenient for commuters, and it is close to key landmarks like Bharat Mandapam and the Supreme Court. Entry is set at a nominal Rs 10 per person.

Visitors can experience interactive simulators to feel like driving a metro train, explore working models of the Tunnel Boring Machine and Launching Girder, and enjoy digital displays, quizzes, selfie points, and souvenir shops. Dedicated sections on Metroman Dr E Sreedharan, a mock metro tunnel, and a model of the Operations Control Centre enhance the experience. Dioramas of Delhi's landmarks, photo galleries, and panels on major Metro milestones provide a detailed overview of the system's journey.

Since opening at Patel Chowk in 2008, the museum welcomed about 5,000 students yearly. Now moved to Supreme Court station, DMRC plans Phase 2 with new displays and interactive features.

Indian Railways bring regional cuisines on Vande Bharat trains

NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has introduced regional cuisines on Vande Bharat trains to provide passengers with authentic local flavours and a culturally rich travel experience. According to the Ministry of Railways, this initiative allows travellers to enjoy India's diverse culinary heritage from the comfort of their seats.

Passengers on the 20101/20102 Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express can savour Maharashtra's Kanda Poha, South Indian Dondakaya Karam Podi Fry, and Andhra Pradesh's Andhra Kodi Kura. Gujarati dishes like Methi Thepla are available on the 20901 MMCT-GNC Vande Bharat Express, while Masala Lauki is served on the 26902 SBIB-VRL Vande Bharat Express. Odisha's Aloo Phulkopi is offered on the 22895 Howrah-Puri train.

Kerala's traditional spread, including white rice, Pachaka Cherupayar Mezhukku Perati, Kadala Curry, Kerala Paratha, plain curd, Palada Payasam, and Appam, is available on the 20633/34 Kasargod-Trivandrum and 20631/32 Mangalore-Trivandrum Vande Bharat trains. West Bengal passengers can enjoy Kosha Paneer on the 20872 ROU-HWH Express and Aloo Potol Bhaja on the 22895 HWH-PURI Express.

Bihar's Champaran Paneer and Champaran Chicken are served on the 22349 PNBE-RNC and 22348 PNBE-HWH Express respectively. Dogri dishes like Ambal Kaddu and Jammu Chana Masala are offered on trains 26401-02 and 26403-04, while Kashmiri specialities, including Tomato Chaman and Kesar Phirni, are available on the SVDK-SINA Vande Bharat Express.

Maharashtra's Masala Upma is available on the 22229 CSMT-MAO Express, and West Bengal's Murgir Jhol on the 22302 NJP-HWH Express. Through this initiative, Indian Railways is celebrating India's culinary diversity, making journeys more enjoyable, memorable, and culturally immersive.

Akhilesh Yadav targets UP govt over cough syrup

LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday criticised the Uttar Pradesh government over the illegal trade of banned codeine-based cough syrup, alleging large-scale irregularities, selective action, and administrative failure. He said the matter would be raised in the Legislative Assembly, calling it a serious public concern. The remarks follow a December 10 Varanasi Police crackdown, which seized around 30,000 bottles of banned cough syrup from a godown, valued at approximately Rs 60 lakh. Yadav alleged complicity within the investigation system, claiming that the STF constables handling the case were involved and questioning the government's ability to deliver justice. Expressing concern for journalists, he said those who exposed the case faced searches, and called on the government to protect media personnel.

QUICK READ

Elon Musk predicts a future without poverty

New Delhi
Tesla CEO Elon Musk said there will be no poverty in the future and everyone will enjoy a "universal high income." His remarks came while reacting to billionaire investor Ray Dalio supporting Trump Accounts, a program for children's investment accounts. Musk appreciated the initiative but claimed saving money would become unnecessary as technological advances would eliminate scarcity. He added that universal high income differs from universal basic income and that there would be enough goods and services for all. Musk's statement sparked debate online, with some questioning incentives and feasibility, while others discussed technology's role in reducing relative poverty globally.

Nick Reiner appears in court over murder charges

Los Angeles
Nick Reiner, 32, son of filmmaker Rob Reiner and Michele Reiner, appeared in court facing charges of fatally stabbing his parents. The arraignment was postponed for three weeks at the defense's request, and no plea was entered. If convicted of first-degree murder, he could face life imprisonment or the death penalty, though California has a moratorium on executions. Nick has publicly discussed his long struggle with drug addiction, which inspired the movie Being Charlie. His siblings expressed deep grief over the loss. The investigation continues, with authorities yet to confirm the motive or recovery of the murder weapon.

US ANNOUNCES $10 BILLION IN ARMS SALE TO TAIWAN

The US deal with Taiwan provides HIMARS, ATACMS, howitzers, drones, missiles, software, and military equipment worth over $1 billion

WASHINGTON

The United States has announced a massive arms sale to Taiwan worth more than $10 billion, a move likely to raise tensions with China. The package includes medium-range missiles, self-propelled howitzers, drones, and other military equipment, signaling strong U.S. support for Taiwan's defense.

The announcement came during a televised address by President Donald Trump, who did not directly mention China or Taiwan. Officials confirmed that the arms sales are part of ongoing efforts to help Taiwan modernize its armed forces and maintain a credible defense system.

The deal covers 82 high-mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS) and 420 Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), similar to military aid previously sent to Ukraine. Taiwan will also receive 60 self-propelled howitzer systems, drones valued at over $1 billion, and other equipment including military software, Javelin and TOW missiles, helicopter parts, and Harpoon missile refurbishment kits.

The U.S. State Department said these sales will support Taiwan's security, stabilize the region, and contribute to economic progress. Under U.S. law, America is obligated to help Taiwan defend itself, a commitment that has become a sensitive issue with Beijing.

China has strongly opposed the legislation enabling these sales, calling it an unfair move that targets China and disrupts bilateral relations. Beijing maintains that Taiwan is part of China and has warned it may take action by force if necessary.

The arms deal reflects the U.S. strategy to strengthen Taiwan's defenses while navigating complex geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, highlighting the growing challenges in U.S.-China relations.

Australia tightens hate speech laws after Beach shooting

SYDNEY

Australia introduces stricter hate speech laws after a deadly Bondi Beach attack, with harsher penalties, federal offenses, and a registry targeting leaders promoting racial hatred

Australia has announced new and stricter hate speech laws following a deadly attack at Bondi Beach that killed 15 Jewish people celebrating Hanukkah. The attack, reportedly inspired by the Islamic State, has prompted urgent action from the government to prevent similar tragedies.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese outlined measures including harsher penalties for preachers or leaders promoting violence, and making hate an aggravating factor in crimes such as online threats and harassment. New federal offenses will address serious racial vilification and advocacy of racial supremacy. Albanese also revealed plans to create a registry of organizations whose leaders spread hate.

The government is under intense pressure over rising antisemitism, which critics say contributed to the attack. "Every Jewish Australian has the right to feel safe, valued, and respected," Albanese said during an interfaith memorial service. Authorities will also gain powers to cancel or reject visas for individuals who promote hate.

A 12-month education taskforce led by business leader David Gonski will work to ensure schools address and prevent antisemitism. Special Envoy Jillian Segal called the measures "an important next step" in a long-planned response to growing hate threats. The surviving gunman, 24-year-old Naveed Akram, has been charged with 59 offenses, including murder and terrorism.

His 50-year-old father was killed in the shootout. Investigators found Islamic State flags in the vehicle registered to the attackers, who had recently traveled to the Philippines. Authorities are continuing searches and investigations both domestically and internationally.

New South Wales Parliament will also review tougher gun laws. Albanese stressed careful consultation to ensure broad parliamentary support. Meanwhile, 17 victims remain hospitalized, as the nation mourns the lives lost and seeks to prevent future attacks.

Trump's policy may hit Indian pharma trade

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump announced major prescription drug price cuts under a "Most Favoured Nation" policy, benchmarking US drug costs against prices in other countries. Speaking Wednesday, he said he negotiated directly with pharmaceutical companies and foreign governments, using tariff threats to force price reductions of up to 600 percent. Trump plans to launch the first round of cuts in January via TrumpRx.gov. Indian pharmaceutical firms, key suppliers of affordable medicines to the US, could face pricing pressure. The policy may reshape trade and negotiations, affecting both branded and generic drugs, while potentially lowering healthcare costs for American families.

The bill passed the lower house and awaits President Lula's decision amid officials' warnings against attacks on democracy

Brazil Senate moves to cut Bolsonaro's prison sentence

BRASILIA

Brazil's Senate approved a controversial bill that could reduce former President Jair Bolsonaro's 27-year prison sentence for his role in the January 2023 coup attempt to just over two years. The measure also affects others convicted for their part in the same riot, when Bolsonaro supporters stormed the presidential palace, Supreme Court, and Congress.

The bill passed the lower house last week and now goes to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has not yet revealed whether he will sign it into law or veto it. Government officials have indicated strong opposition, warning that attackers on democracy must face full consequences.

Senator Esperidiao Amin, the bill's sponsor in the Senate, said the measure was "part of our path to peace" and celebrated its approval by a 48-25 vote. The law avoids cumulative punishments for multiple crimes and provides reduced sentences for those acting in crowds rather than as leaders or financiers.

Bolsonaro's eldest son, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, welcomed the bill, saying it "was not exactly what we wanted, but what was possible within Congress today." The approval comes as Bolsonaro prepares to run for president next year, adding a political dimension to the debate.

The bill is expected to face legal challenges, with Lula-aligned lawmakers already preparing appeals to the Supreme Court. Changes made in the Senate clarified that reductions only apply to coup-related actions, but opponents warn this could still undermine justice.

Around 2,000 people were arrested after the Brasilia attack, many of whom were convicted of attempting a coup. The bill has sparked national debate over democracy, accountability, and reconciliation in Brazil.

Human Rights group criticizes Bangladesh over journalist arrest

DHAKA

An international human rights organization has condemned the arrest of senior Bangladeshi journalist Anis Alamgir under the Anti-Terrorism Act, calling it a misuse of the law to suppress free expression. Amnesty International said Alamgir was detained on December 15 and placed on remand without clear charges, allegedly for supporting the banned Awami League. The group urged the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus to respect international human rights obligations, release Alamgir, and stop using restrictive laws to target journalists and political dissent ahead of the 2026 elections.

Lukashenko says U.S. relations could improve soon

MINSK

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said relations with the United States could improve if Washington acknowledges that its efforts to overturn his disputed 2020 re-election failed, calling such recognition a starting point for dialogue. Lukashenko, in power since 1994, won a sixth term amid widespread protests and allegations of election fraud, which he denies. Western countries refused to recognize the results and imposed sanctions over the election and human rights abuses. Ties deteriorated further after Belarus allowed Russian forces to use its territory during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Despite strained relations, Lukashenko said Belarus had done nothing wrong to the U.S. and expressed interest in pragmatic cooperation, including on international issues. He pointed to the recent release of 123 political prisoners, facilitated by U.S. envoy John Coale, as a sign that limited dialogue remains possible and urged moving past hostility.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	9		1		4		3	
7		5		8		6		4
2		4	6		7		8	
8		7		1		5		6
	5		7		8		4	
1		3		4		7		8
	2		3		5	8		9
3		9	8				5	
	8			9	1	3		2

7	8	9	5	6	1	4	3	2
1	6	3	8	4	2	5	7	9
5	4	2	7	9	3	1	8	6
4	3	8	6	2	9	7	1	5
2	5	6	1	7	4	3	9	8
9	1	7	3	5	8	2	6	4
8	2	4	9	3	7	6	5	1
3	9	5	4	1	6	8	2	7
6	7	1	2	8	5	9	4	3

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

European Union must reform or risk irrelevance: Report

LONDON

The European Union must reform or risk irrelevance as U.S.-China rivalry reshapes global politics, a report led by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon warns. The report, titled World Rewired: Navigating a Multi-Speed, Multipolar Order, highlights growing challenges in security, energy, technology, and trade, urging Europe to integrate further to defend itself and sustain economic growth.

Blair and Dimon argue that Europe's reliance on the U.S. for security while simultaneously expanding trade with China leaves it vulnerable. "If it cannot stand on its own against Russia, it will be even less able to manage systemic competition with the U.S. or China," the report states, adding that reform is mandatory to remain relevant.

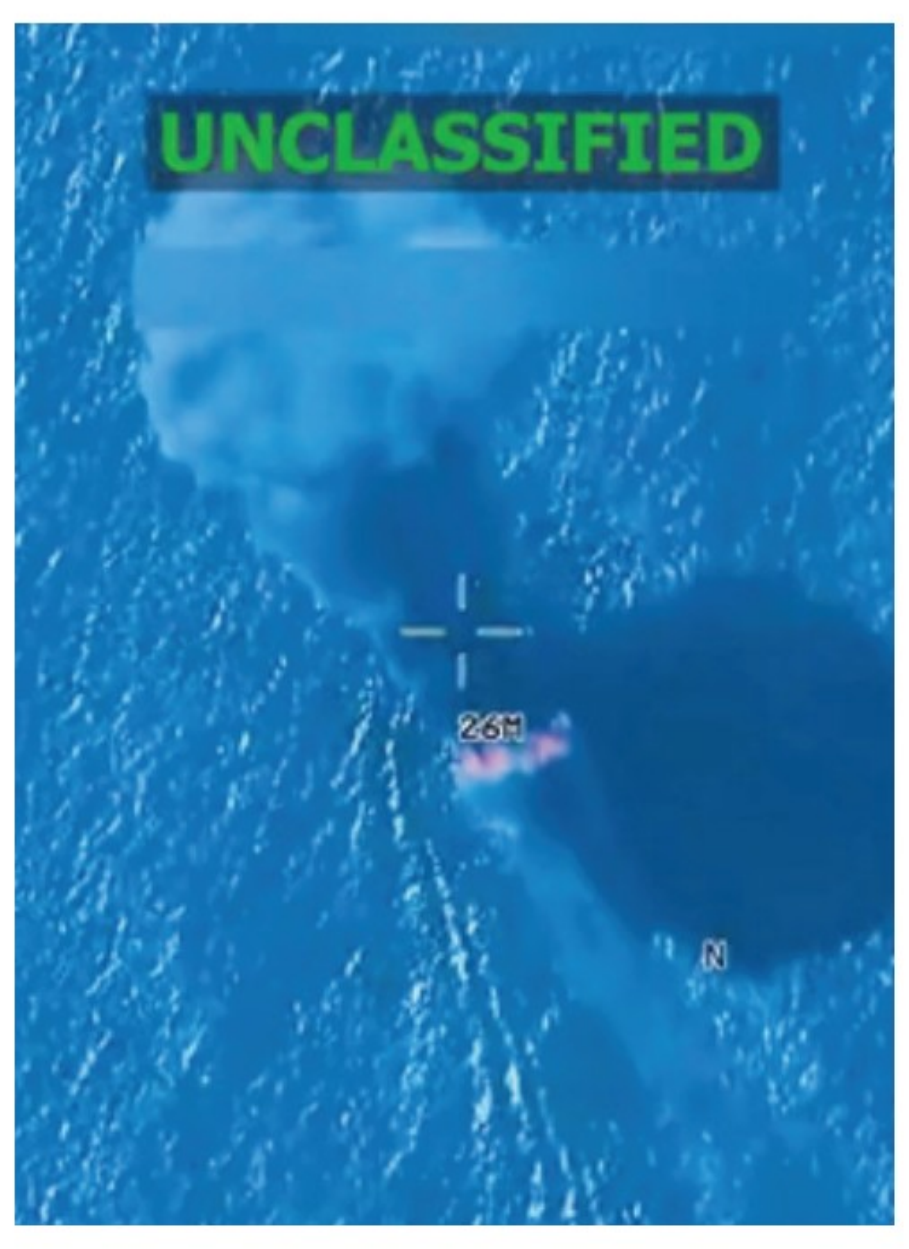
The report underscores the pressures facing middle powers such as India and Gulf states, noting that multi-alignment strategies may no longer work. U.S. tariffs on India over Russian oil purchases and the UAE's pivot toward U.S. technology partnerships illustrate the difficult choices smaller nations must make between competing global powers.

Authors describe the current global landscape as unprecedented, likening it to a "3D chess board," with political populism, artificial intelligence, and economic shifts upending traditional world order assumptions.

While the U.S. retains significant power, domestic political instability and high debt pose major challenges, while China must balance growth with demographic and debt constraints.

US military strikes drug boat in eastern Pacific Ocean, 4 killed

WASHINGTON



The U.S. military struck a boat suspected of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing four people, officials said. The attack is part of a broader anti-drug campaign in the Caribbean and Pacific, which has already targeted 26 boats and left at least 99 people dead.

The U.S. Southern Command described the vessel as operated by "narco-terrorists" along a known trafficking route, although no public evidence was provided. A video released by the military showed the boat before it exploded. President Donald Trump defended the strikes as necessary to stop drugs flowing into the United States, calling it part of an "armed conflict" with cartels.

The attacks have drawn scrutiny from lawmakers. On Wednesday, the House rejected Democratic resolutions that would have required Congress to authorize further military action against drug cartels. Senate Republicans had previously opposed similar measures, and any resolution that passed would likely face a presidential veto.

The campaign began in early September, with follow-up strikes sometimes targeting survivors of initial attacks. Critics have expressed concern over civilian casualties and the expanding scope of U.S. military operations in Central and South America.

Trump's administration has emphasized that the strikes are aimed at key drug trafficking networks and intend to reduce the influence of cartels in the region. The military has vowed to continue targeting vessels suspected of smuggling drugs while maintaining coordination with international partners.

As debate continues in Washington over the legality and oversight of these operations, the administration remains committed to its aggressive strategy, framing the strikes as essential to national security and the fight against drug-related crime.

FROZEN ASSETS DILEMMA

European Union leaders scramble to fund Ukraine crisis

BRUSSELS

European Union leaders are under pressure to agree on how to send billions of euros to Ukraine, as the country faces a financial crisis that could affect its ability to fight Russia. The meeting on Thursday is seen as a test of Europe's unity after U.S. President Donald Trump called the EU "weak."

The European Commission proposed using frozen Russian central bank assets, mostly held in Belgium, to secure a large loan to Kyiv. However, Belgium worries the plan may not be legally safe. Italy and other EU countries also expressed concerns, leaving officials racing to find a workable solution.

Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever said guarantees are needed to protect Belgium from any future Russian legal claims, which could be far higher than the frozen assets themselves. Russia has already filed a $230 billion lawsuit in Moscow, claiming the plan is illegal.

Without EU support, Ukraine risks running out of funds by mid-2026, which could allow Russia to gain the upper hand. A senior EU diplomat said failing to finance Ukraine could threaten Europe's security and credibility.

Other options include borrowing money against the EU budget or individual countries raising funds themselves, but these could increase national debts and leave Ukraine with uncertain long-term support. Most EU leaders see using Russian assets as the most practical solution, provided Belgium receives full protection from potential legal losses.

Diplomats expect a deal by Friday morning, emphasizing that the summit will not end without a solution. EU countries are working to balance legal safety, financial needs, and unity to keep Ukraine supported in its ongoing fight against Russia.

QUICK READ

IndiGo rebuilds after disruptions, restores daily flights

New Delhi

IndiGo has restored its operations to about 2,200 flights per day after recent disruptions, according to CEO Pieter Elbers. In a video message, he said the worst phase is over and teams worked together to stabilise services. He thanked pilots, cabin crew, airport staff, control centres and customer service teams for their efforts. Elbers said quick recovery showed strong teamwork. The airline will now focus on building resilience, studying root causes and rebuilding systems. An external aviation expert will review the issue. Leaders will visit stations, collect feedback, and strengthen operations further for passengers and future growth across its network.

Ola Electric shares fall after founder sale

Mumbai

Shares of Ola Electric fell nearly three percent on Thursday after founder Bhavish Aggarwal sold part of his personal stake. The stock traded near Rs 32 and stayed close to its yearly low despite a steady market. Exchange data showed Aggarwal sold over four crore shares worth about Rs 142 crore. The company said the sale was a one time move to repay a promoter level loan. Ola Electric added that all pledged shares are now released and the transaction does not affect business operations or promoter control. Investors remained cautious as selling pressure continued during trading.

RBI approves Paytm subsidiary for cross-border payments

New Delhi

Paytm's subsidiary, Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), has received the Reserve Bank of India's approval to operate as a Payment Aggregator for offline transactions and cross-border payments. The authorisation, granted on December 17, 2025, comes in addition to PPSL's existing approval for online payment aggregation issued last month. PPSL, fully owned by One97 Communications, can now handle both inward and outward cross-border transactions under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007. The move strengthens Paytm's presence in offline and international payment services, enabling businesses and consumers to complete transactions more efficiently while expanding the company's payment ecosystem.

India Oman trade deal boosts gulf ties

Since 2020, Indian investments in Oman surpassed $5 billion in green steel, ammonia, aluminium, and logistics

NEW DELHI

India and Oman are moving closer to signing a Free Trade Agreement that is expected to strengthen economic ties between the two countries and the wider Gulf region. The proposed pact will be Oman's second trade agreement with a single nation and its first such deal in nearly two decades, making it an important moment in bilateral relations.

Officials say the agreement will improve access to markets, encourage fresh investments, and deepen cooperation across several key industries. It is also expected to help both nations diversify trade and build stronger supply chains during a period of global economic change.

Indian investments in Oman have grown rapidly in recent years, crossing five billion dollars since 2020. These investments cover areas such as green steel, green ammonia, aluminium production, and logistics, showing India's long term trust in Oman as a stable business base.

The India Oman FTA comes as New Delhi continues to expand its global trade network. In recent years, India has signed multiple agreements that have benefited farmers, exporters, and small businesses by lowering tariffs and opening new markets.

Trade pacts with countries like Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and members of the European Free Trade Association have already boosted exports in sectors including textiles, gems, jewellery, engineering goods, and food products. Similar gains are expected from the Oman agreement.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the deal would create opportunities in textiles, automobiles, renewable energy, and food processing. He also highlighted Oman's strategic location, which can help Indian firms reach markets across the Gulf, Africa, and beyond in coming years ahead.

The U.S.-India Business Council, founded in 1976, marks India's growing financial prominence and global investment role at NSE

Strong India-U.S. ties benefit global economy: NASDAQ Exec

MUMBAI

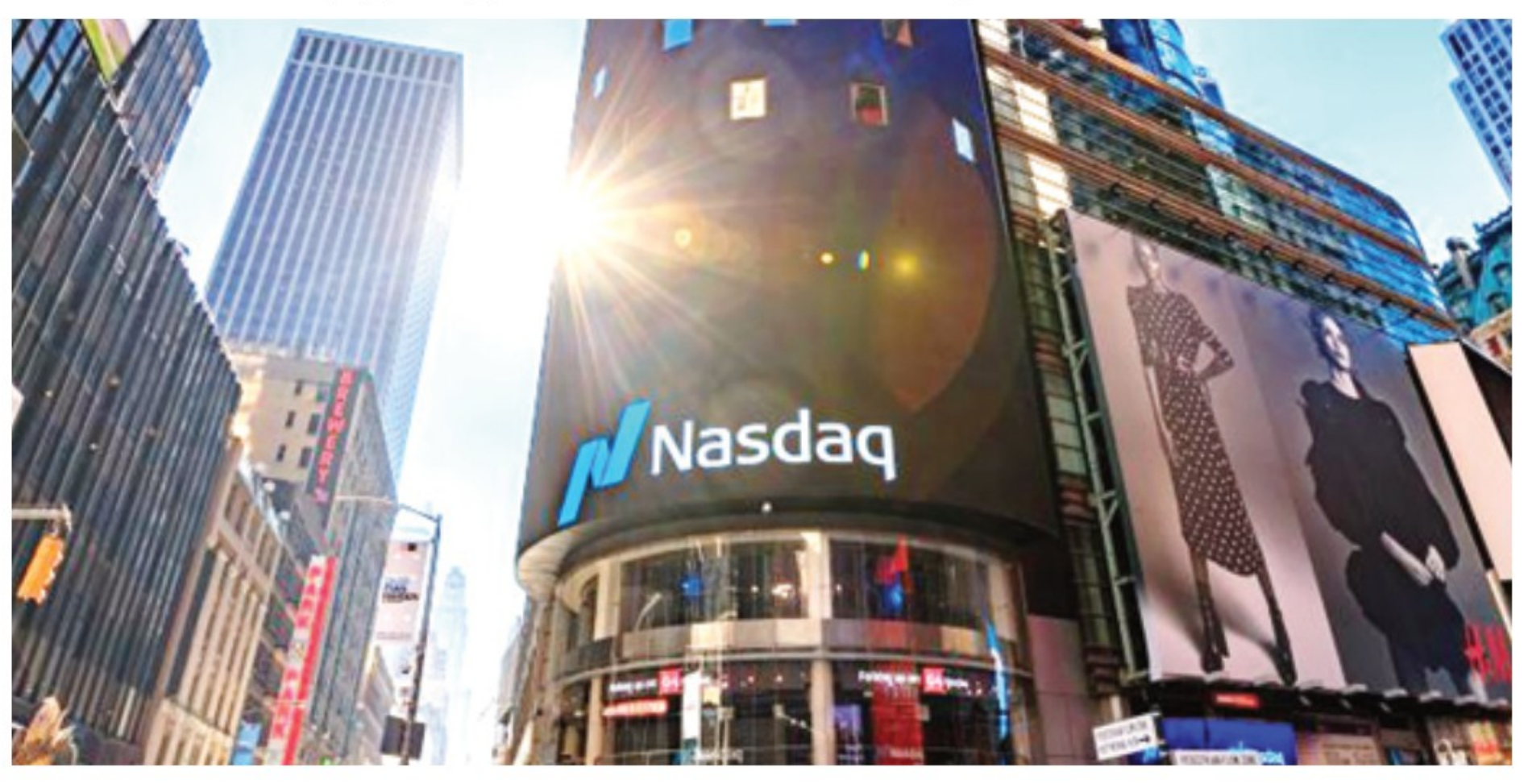
The growth of India's economy is seen as a positive for the United States, reinforcing the strong trade and investment partnership between the two nations, said Edward Knight, Executive Vice Chairman of NASDAQ. Speaking ahead of the NSE bell-ringing ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-India Business Council, Knight emphasized that a thriving Indian economy ultimately benefits the U.S. and global markets.

Knight highlighted that the U.S. economy prospers when the global economy grows, and India's rapid economic expansion mirrors the growth seen in the U.S. over recent years. He noted that the collaboration between Indian and U.S. businesses remains robust, providing opportunities across sectors like artificial intelligence and quantum computing, despite global economic changes or discussions around tariffs and taxes.

The U.S.-India Business Council was first established in February 1976 to explore ways of connecting the two economies. Knight said returning to the NSE for the anniversary celebration is symbolic of India's growing financial prominence and its increasing role in global investment opportunities.

He added that companies in both countries cooperate daily, driving innovation and trade. Looking ahead, Knight expects both nations to continue advancing economic ties, with a potential trade agreement on the horizon. The partnership has strengthened steadily over the past five decades and is projected to expand further as both countries find new avenues for collaboration.

Addressing investor interest, Knight noted that NASDAQ is responding to global demand, especially from the $47 trillion Asian market, enabling seamless trading in NASDAQ-listed securities. He stressed that this reflects the increasing integration of global markets and the importance of strong India-U.S. economic ties for investors worldwide.



MCX sets record date for stock split

MUMBAI

Under the proposed split, each ₹10 share becomes five ₹2 shares; 10 shares become 50, value unchanged, eligible only to shareholders on the record date.

The Multi Commodity Exchange of India has announced January 2, 2026 as the record date for its first ever stock split, a move that slightly lifted investor sentiment on Thursday. The exchange informed markets that the split will be carried out in a 1:5 ratio, marking an important corporate action in its history.

Following the announcement, MCX shares traded marginally higher during morning trade. At around 11.05 am, the stock was quoted at Rs 10,071, up by Rs 46 or 0.46 percent. Market participants reacted calmly, viewing the decision as a long term step rather than a short term trigger.

Under the proposed split, each equity share with a face value of Rs 10 will be divided into five shares of Rs 2 each. This means an investor holding 10 shares before the split will own 50 shares after it, while the overall value of the holding remains unchanged. Only shareholders whose names appear on the company's records on the record date will be eligible.

The stock split will increase the total number of outstanding shares without altering market capitalisation. This generally makes shares more affordable and can improve trading liquidity over time.

MCX stock has shown strong momentum in recent months. The scrip has gained over 4.5 percent in one month, more than 27 percent in six months, and nearly 60 percent so far this year. The company's market value stands above Rs 50,895 crore.

During the first half of FY26, MCX reported strong financial performance, with higher profits and revenues reflecting steady growth across its core commodities trading business in the domestic market period.

India UPI QR usage soars to new heights

MUMBAI

India's digital payments landscape is witnessing remarkable growth, with active UPI QR users reaching 709 million and transaction volumes hitting 59.33 billion in July-September, a new report revealed on Thursday. Transaction value also surged 21 percent year-on-year to Rs 74.84 lakh crore, highlighting the growing adoption of scan-and-pay methods across the country.

According to Worldline India, dense QR acceptance at kiranas, pharmacies, transport hubs, and rural markets has made UPI the preferred payment mode nationwide. Person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions are outpacing person-to-person (P2P) activity, reflecting UPI's dominance in daily retail payments. P2M transactions rose 35 percent to 37.46 billion, while P2P transactions increased 29 percent to 21.65 billion.

The average ticket size declined slightly to Rs 1,262, indicating that consumers are increasingly using UPI for micro-transactions such as mobility, food, healthcare, and local commerce. Point-of-sale (PoS) terminals also grew 35 percent, reaching 12.12 million, while Bharat QR saw a minor decline amid the shift to UPI QR usage. Private banks continue to lead, holding 84 percent of acceptance deployment. Card usage trends showed credit card transactions rising 26 percent to 1.45 billion, with a transaction value of Rs 6.07 lakh crore. Meanwhile, debit card transactions declined 22 percent, reflecting a shift of low-ticket spends to UPI.

India home loans set for historic growth

MUMBAI

India is witnessing a major shift in its housing finance sector, with home loan disbursements expected to reach a massive Rs 150 lakh crore by 2035, according to a new report. Experts say the country has entered a strong housing finance upcycle that could reshape the future of lending and urban living.

The report highlights that India's mortgage penetration stands at only 11 percent of GDP, which is far lower than global averages. This shows that a large part of the housing finance market remains untapped. With rising incomes and growing demand for better homes, the sector is now approaching a key turning point that offers long term growth opportunities.

Rapid urbanisation is playing a major role in this transformation. By 2035, India's urban population is expected to cross 650 million, with the urbanisation rate rising to 43 percent. Large investments in highways, metro rail projects, logistics corridors, and new satellite towns are expanding housing demand beyond major cities into smaller urban centres.

Government support is also strengthening the housing ecosystem. Schemes such as PMAY 2.0 aim to support financing for 30 million new homes, while SWAMIH 2 targets the completion of one lakh stalled housing units. The Rs 1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund is designed to modernise cities and create new growth hubs.

Strict enforcement of the Real Estate Regulation Act has improved transparency and boosted buyer confidence. The report estimates that even with conservative assumptions, cumulative home loan disbursements could touch Rs 150 trillion by 2035.

With strong balance sheets, improved affordability, and steady demand visibility, housing finance is set to become a key pillar of India's economic growth in the coming decade.

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Card usage trends showed credit card transactions rising 26 percent to 1.45 billion, with a transaction value of Rs 6.07 lakh crore. Meanwhile, debit card transactions declined 22 percent, reflecting a shift of low-ticket spends to UPI. Mobile and contactless payments are gaining traction, particularly in metro areas and quick-service retail.

The report highlighted that Q4 2025 and early 2026 are expected to bring further innovation, with interoperable QR codes becoming a standard across mobility, healthcare, fuel stations, and public utilities, strengthening India's position as one of the world's most dynamic real-time payments economies.

HIDDEN FEES REMOVED

SEBI reforms mutual fund costs to boost transparency

MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has unveiled major reforms in mutual fund expense regulations aimed at increasing transparency for investors, even as asset management companies (AMCs) may face short-term profit pressure, according to a report by Centrum.

The key change involves removing the additional 5 basis points (bps) expense allowance tied to exit loads, which is expected to reduce hidden costs and clarify actual fund expenses. While this may impact AMC profitability in the near term, it better aligns investor costs with fund management expenses. The report notes that without corrective measures, AMCs could see a cumulative decline in profit before tax (PBT) by FY27. However, fund houses can adjust operational structures or share costs with distributors to sustain business without raising investor charges.

SEBI has also rationalised total expense ratio (TER) slabs for large equity-oriented schemes. For schemes with assets over Rs 20 billion, the proposed TER cut has been reduced to 10 bps from the previously suggested 15 bps, ensuring that large, efficient schemes remain viable while offering competitive pricing.

A major highlight of the reforms is enhanced transparency. The new rules require clearer segregation of base expenses, brokerage costs, and statutory levies, helping investors better understand the true cost of investing. Brokerage caps have been lowered in both cash and derivatives segments, with statutory levies charged separately. Analysts expect the impact on brokerages to be largely neutral, preserving market stability.

South Korea UAE explore AI energy partnership

SEOUL

South Korea and the United Arab Emirates have held fresh discussions to strengthen cooperation in artificial intelligence and energy, signalling deeper ties between the two countries. South Korean Industry Minister Kim Jung-kwan met UAE Industry Minister Sultan Al Jaber in Seoul to review progress made after the leaders' summit held in Abu Dhabi last month.

According to South Korea's Industry Ministry, the talks focused on follow-up steps linked to agreements reached between President Lee Jae Myung and UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. A key highlight of the discussions was the UAE's ambitious Stargate project, which aims to build advanced AI computing and cloud infrastructure in the Middle East.

Minister Kim said South Korea is well placed to contribute to the project through its strengths in semiconductors, data centres, engineering, and construction. He added that Korean firms could play a meaningful role in developing reliable and efficient digital infrastructure for the initiative.

Energy cooperation was another major focus area. Both sides agreed that oil and gas trade remains a central pillar of their economic relationship. The ministers also discussed expanding their joint oil stockpiling programme, which has been in place for 13 years and has helped improve energy supply stability for both nations.

On the same day, South Korean Climate Minister Kim Sung-hwan also met Sultan Al Jaber to explore broader energy collaboration. During the meeting, South Korea offered its low carbon power technologies, including advanced power grids and energy storage systems, to support the Stargate project.

The two sides further discussed the idea of launching a joint energy forum. This platform would support global efforts to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. Officials said closer cooperation could help promote clean energy solutions while supporting long term economic growth for both countries.

Cummins, Lyon Dominate as England Stumble to 213/8

Aus tightened grip on third Test as Cummins and Lyon rattled England at Adelaide

ADELAIDE

Australian captain Pat Cummins and veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon spearheaded a commanding bowling performance on Day 2 of the third Test at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday, reducing England to 213 for eight in reply to Australia's first-innings total of 371. At stumps, England trailed by 158 runs, firmly placing the hosts in control of the contest.

England began the day on a positive note after quickly wrapping up Australia's innings on the second morning. Resuming at 326 for eight overnight, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon added valuable runs, taking the total to 371. Starc was the aggressor, reaching a brisk half-century off just 73 deliveries, peppering the boundary with confidence. He even struck a four off the first ball after reaching his fifty, but Jofra Archer eventually had the final say, dismissing Starc on the 75th ball he faced.

Lyon showed composure with the bat, playing a resolute defensive role, while Scott Boland chipped in with boundaries to keep the scoreboard moving. However, Archer struck again in the 92nd over, removing Lyon to end Australia's innings. The wicket also marked Archer's fourth five-wicket haul in Test cricket, his third against Australia, underlining his effectiveness on Australian soil.

In response, England's openers started with intent, particularly Ben Duckett, who looked more fluent than Zak Crawley in the early exchanges. However, Cummins provided the breakthrough in the eighth over, having Crawley caught behind to halt the opening stand. Nathan Lyon then made an immediate impact, striking twice in his first over by dismissing Ollie Pope and trapping Duckett with a superb delivery just two balls later.

Those wickets proved significant milestones for Lyon, as he surpassed Glenn McGrath's tally of 563 Test wickets to become Australia's second-highest wicket-taker in Test cricket history. His achievement further cemented his status as one of the greats of the game.

FARHAN YOUSAF RETAINED IN PAKISTAN U19 SQUAD

LAHORE

Farhan Yousaf will continue to lead Pakistan's Under-19 side as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming tri-series in Zimbabwe and the ICC U19 World Cup. The squad largely mirrors the one currently competing in the ACC U19 Asia Cup in Dubai, underlining the selectors' confidence in the existing group ahead of a packed international schedule.

Pakistan U19 are presently engaged in the Asia Cup, where they finished second in Group A and are set to face Bangladesh in the semi-final on Friday. The final of the eight-team tournament will be played on Sunday. Performances in the ongoing competition are expected to further shape the team's momentum as they head into the tri-series and the World Cup.

There has been only one change to the Asia Cup squad, with right-arm fast bowler Umar Zaib coming in for left-arm spinner Mohammad Huzaifa. The change applies to both the Zimbabwe tri-series and the ICC U19 World Cup, indicating a strategic preference for pace options in seaming conditions expected in southern Africa.

Right-arm pacer Ali Raza, who impressed at the 2024 ICC U19 World Cup, has once again been included. Raza made headlines last year with a memorable spell of 4 for 34 against Australia in the semi-final, narrowly missing out on steering Pakistan to a famous win. He ended that tournament with nine wickets in just three matches, despite being only 15 years old at the time, and remains one of the key prospects in the current squad.

Farhan Yousaf retains captaincy as Pakistan name squad for Zimbabwe tri-series and ICC Under-19 World Cup campaign preparations

The selected squad features Farhan Yousaf as captain and Usman Khan as vice-captain, along with Abdul Subhan, Ahmed Hussain, Ali Hasan Baloch, Daniyal Ali Khan, Huzaifa Ahsan, Momin Qamar, Mohammad Sayyam, Niqab Shafiq, Sameer Minhas, Umar Zaib, and wicketkeepers Hamza Zahoor and Mohammad Shayan. Non-travelling reserves include Abdul Qadir, Farhanullah, Hassan Khan, Ibtisam Azhar, and Mohammad Huzaifa.

India's junior World Cup bronze hero Prince Deep Singh enters Hockey India League 2026 brimming with confidence and ambition

Prince Deep Singh Boosts Confidence in HIL 2026

NEW DELHI

Fresh from an impressive showing at the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup, young Indian goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh is set to begin his Hockey India League (HIL) 2026 campaign with renewed belief and momentum. Having played a crucial role in India's bronze medal-winning run, the Tamil Nadu Dragons custodian emerged as one of the standout performers of the tournament, earning praise for his composure, reflexes, and match-defining saves.

Prince Deep's performances were particularly memorable during the high-pressure quarterfinal shootout against Belgium, where his timely interventions proved decisive in keeping India's medal hopes alive. Throughout the competition, he displayed remarkable consistency, maturity beyond his years, and the ability to rise to big occasions, attributes that have significantly boosted his confidence ahead of the upcoming HIL season.

Reflecting on the impact of the Junior World Cup on his mindset, Prince Deep said the experience of playing in front of a passionate home crowd made a huge difference. He noted that every save was met with loud cheers, which served as powerful motivation and helped him settle into high-pressure situations. The young goalkeeper recalled the shootout against Belgium as a defining moment, explaining how the presence of thousands of fans behind him inspired him to push himself further. After saving the fourth attempt, his confidence soared, and he went on to pull off a dramatic double-save on the fifth, a moment that quickly went viral and became one of the highlights of the tournament.

As he prepares for HIL 2026, Prince Deep will once again turn out for the Tamil Nadu Dragons, where he will share goalkeeping duties with legendary Irish goalkeeper David Harte. The opportunity to train and play alongside Harte is something Prince Deep values deeply, having already benefited from the veteran's guidance last season.

Stokes, Archer Clash as England Struggle

LONDON

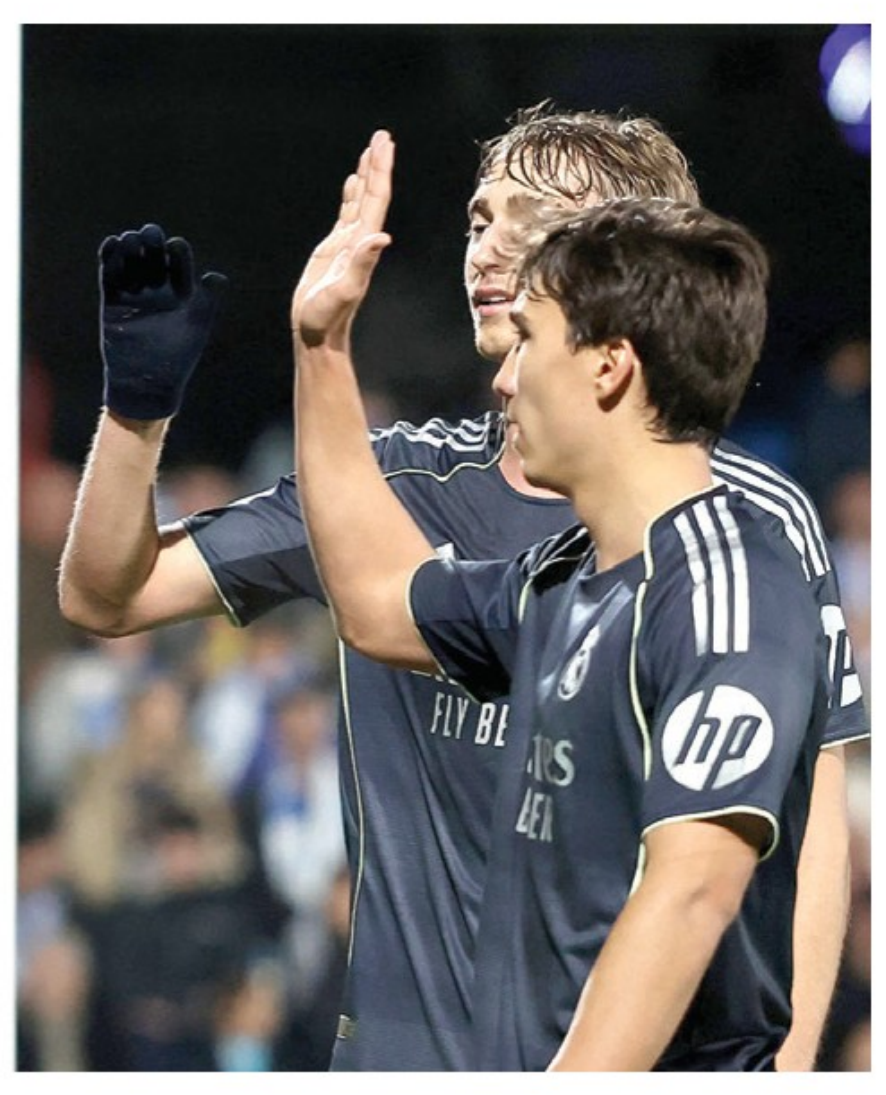
England cricket team skipper Ben Stokes and pacer Jofra Archer engaged in a tense on-field exchange during Day 2 of the third Ashes Test against Australia on Thursday. Resuming at 326/8, Mitchell Starc looked in brilliant form as he targeted the England bowlers. The left-handed batter slammed four boundaries in quick succession to bring up his half-century, and it appeared England had no answer to his strokeplay. Stokes was seen having a chat with Archer, with the England skipper seemingly expressing frustration at the lack of control in the pacer's bowling. Archer responded by dismissing Starc, but the heated exchange continued during the celebration. It appeared Stokes was asking Jofra to concentrate on his line and length and continue bowling according to the field given to him.

Legendary Australia skipper Ricky Ponting, who was on commentary during the entire exchange, said: There is the chat between Stokes and Archer and it led to that delivery there (the wicket), and there's the reaction (from Stokes).

It will go on a bit longer as well; Stokes goes straight to him. Bit of a slap around his own face from Jofra. Stokes may have wanted to do that as well, I reckon, he added.

Real, Atletico Advance as Copa del Rey Delivers Drama

MADRID



Real Madrid secured a place in the fourth round of the Copa del Rey after a nervy 3-2 away victory over third-tier side Talavera, surviving a dramatic late scare to avoid extra time. Despite their superior quality, Carlo Ancelotti's men were pushed hard by determined lower-league opposition in a match filled with tension until the final whistle.

Kylian Mbappe opened the scoring for Madrid in the 41st minute from the penalty spot before playing a key role in the second goal, pulling the ball back from the byline for Manuel Farrando to turn into his own net. Talavera refused to go quietly and pulled a goal back through Nahuel Arroyo in the 79th minute, igniting hopes of a famous upset. Mbappe appeared to settle the contest three minutes from time by restoring Madrid's two-goal cushion, but Gonzalo Di Renzo struck in the 90th minute to make it 3-2. Madrid then relied on a superb late save from goalkeeper Andriy Lunin to deny Isaiah and prevent the tie from heading into extra time.

Atletico Madrid also advanced to the last 16 after a hard-fought 3-2 win away to third-tier Atletico Baleares, despite coach Diego Simeone rotating his squad. Antoine Griezmann scored twice, while Gianluca Raspadori added the third. Baleares kept the contest alive with goals from Gerardo Bonet and a stoppage-time penalty converted by Mouhamadou Keita, ensuring a tense finish for the visitors.

In the only all-La Liga clash of the round, Deportivo Alaves edged Sevilla 1-0 thanks to a second-half penalty from Carlos Vicente. The defeat could increase pressure on Sevilla head coach Matias Almeyda amid an already challenging season. The biggest shock of the night came in Santander, where second-division leaders Racing Santander defeated La Liga's third-placed Villarreal 2-1.

Rohan Patil, Veer Ahlawat Share Lead

NAVI MUMBAI

Rohan Dhole Patil broke the course record with his exceptional seven-under 64 to move into the joint lead at 10-under 203 along with Veer Ahlawat, who carded a two-over 73, in round three of the INR 1 crore CIDCO Open 2025, the first-ever professional event being played at the Kharghar Valley Golf Course (KVGC) in Navi Mumbai.

Pune's Rohan Patil (70-69-64), searching for his maiden title, eclipsed the previous course record of 65 set by Veer Ahlawat (65-65-73) in Round One. Rohan thus jumped nine spots from his overnight tied 10th place, even as Gurugram-based Veer, the sole leader for the first two days, held on to his position at the top of the leaderboard.

BCCI Secy Saikia: IPL focuses on promoting young talents

NEW DELHI

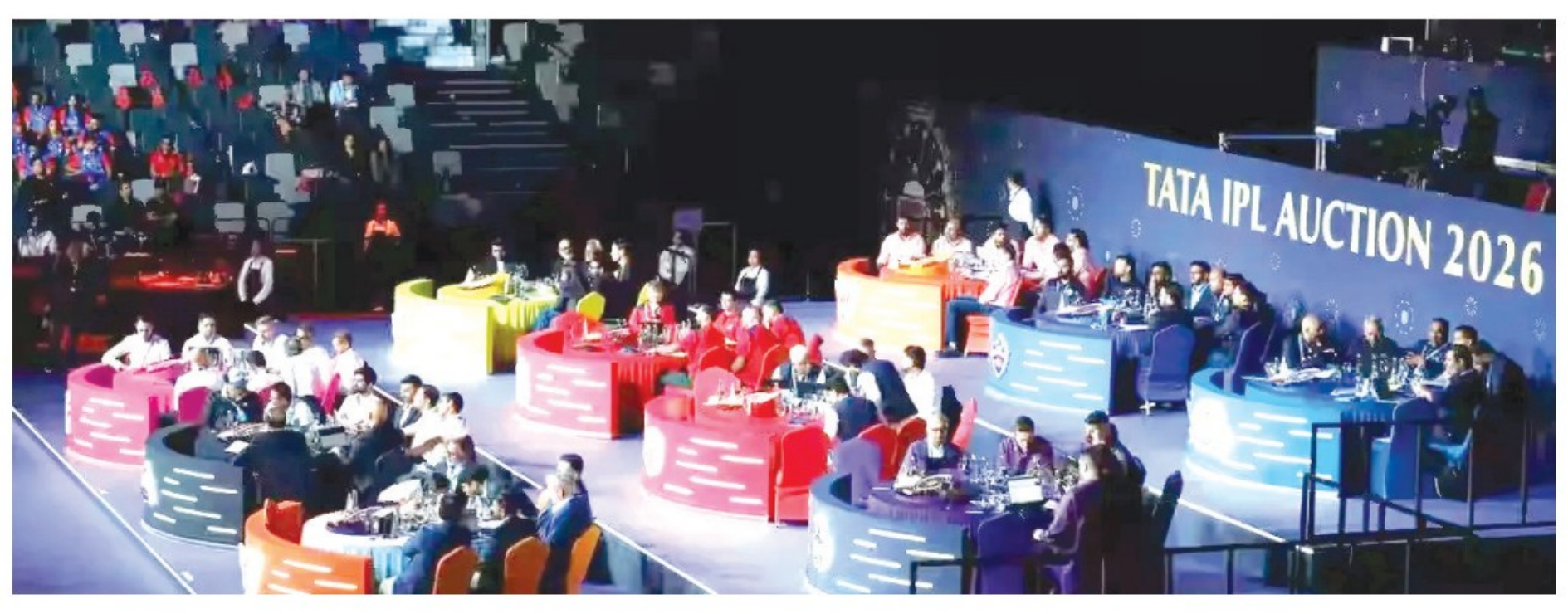
BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia expressed delight over uncapped players earning big in the Indian Premier League (IPL) mini-auction, saying the tournament continues to serve its core purpose of providing a platform for young and emerging talent across the country.

Uncapped players emerged as the biggest talking point of the auction, with franchises spending significant sums to secure promising domestic performers. Delhi Capitals made headlines by signing Jammu and Kashmir pacer Auqib Dar for Rs. 84 crore, while five-time champions Chennai Super Kings invested heavily in youth by roping in Rajasthan cricketer Kartik Sharma and Uttar Pradesh all-rounder Prashant Veer for Rs. 14.20 crore each.

Reacting to the developments, Saikia said he was pleased to see franchises backing players based on their domestic performances and giving opportunities to talent from across the country.

I'm extremely happy because some uncapped players of India from various states, from their domestic performances, the franchises are picking up. You can take the example of that guy from J&K, Auqib Dar, another from UP (Veer) and one from Rajasthan (Kartik). So this is precisely what the IPL is all about, that we have to promote our young talents.

Although they're not getting opportunities in the Indian team, or they are getting the cap, without getting the cap also they can do big in life and this is the perfect example. And that platform is ready for them, and I am sure in the coming times more and more youngsters from various states by participating and performing in domestic cricket will come to the limelight and attract the focus and attention of all these franchises, scouts and persons who are involved, he added.



Carlos Alcaraz Ends 7-Year Partnership With Coach Juan Carlos Ferrero

EL PALMAR

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz is parting ways with his longtime coach, Juan Carlos Ferrero, the man who guided him to the pinnacle of men's tennis during a remarkably successful seven-year partnership. Alcaraz announced the decision to end their collaboration in a message on his social networks. Ferrero, in a separate statement, thanked his protege and said he wished he could have continued. With Ferrero, who coached the Spaniard since he was 15 years old, Alcaraz claimed six Grand Slams: two French Open titles, two Wimbledon crowns and two US Opens. He amassed 24 tour-level titles, including eight Masters 1000 trophies. After more than seven years together, Juanki and I have decided to bring our chapter together as coach and player to an end, the 22-year-old Alcaraz wrote. Thank you for turning childhood dreams into reality. We started this journey when I was barely a kid, and throughout all this time you've accompanied me on an incredible journey, on and off the court. I've enjoyed every single step with you immensely.

With Ferrero, Alcaraz became the youngest player to reach No. 1 in the ATP rankings after winning the U.S. Open in 2022 at 19.

Today is a difficult day, Ferrero said. One of those when it's hard to find the right words. Saying goodbye is never easy, especially when there are so many shared experiences behind it. We have worked hard, grown together, and shared unforgettable moments.

Alcaraz did not say whether he would hire a new coach as a replacement. Last year, Alcaraz hired Samuel Lopez to work alongside Ferrero.

UP Prometheans join Shooting League of India for 2026 season

India's Shooting League expands with Uttar Pradesh's UP Prometheans joining inaugural season, boosting grassroots development and competitive excellence

NEW DELHI

The Shooting League of India (SLI) on Thursday announced the inclusion of UP Prometheans, a Uttar Pradesh–based franchise, for its much-anticipated inaugural season scheduled from February 16 to 26, 2026. The addition marks a significant step in the league's expansion strategy and underscores its broader ambition to build a strong, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystem for the sport of shooting across the country.

Welcoming the new franchise, National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) President Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo expressed confidence that UP Prometheans would add meaningful value to the league. He noted that Uttar Pradesh possesses immense sporting potential and that the entry of a franchise rooted in education and athlete development aligns seamlessly with SLI's long-term vision. According to him, the league aims not only to deliver high-quality competition but also to inspire youth participation and strengthen India's shooting talent pipeline.

The UP Prometheans franchise is owned by Mukesh Sharma, founder and chairperson of Prometheus, an international school based in Noida. Sharma's involvement brings an education-led approach to professional sport, emphasizing infrastructure creation and early talent nurturing. League officials highlighted that his commitment to providing opportunities through structured training and world-class facilities reflects the core philosophy of SLI—to nurture talent, inspire young athletes, and elevate Indian shooting to global standards.

Prometheus School has already established shooting as a structured sport from Grade 5 onwards, catering to students aged nine years and above. The programme focuses on developing technical skills, mental resilience, precision, and hand–eye coordination, laying a strong foundation for competitive excellence. The school campus features an Olympic-standard indoor shooting range, including a 10-metre facility with 10 manual targets and one SIUS electronic target system.

Ketan Malik Wins Gold at National Shooting

NEW DELHI

Haryana's Ketan Malik claimed gold in the Women's 10m Air Pistol at the 68th National Shooting Championship, defeating Paris Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker and Asian Games champion Palak Gulia with a final score of 240.0. Meenu Pathak won silver, and Surbhi Rao took bronze. In the Junior category, Vanshika Chaudhary edged Anjali Shekhawat for gold, while Palak Gulia earned bronze. Lakshita Bishnoi secured the Youth title. Haryana dominated team events, winning Senior and Junior Women's golds, while Delhi topped the Youth team standings. The championship featured over 900 shooters across 39 relays.

Justin Faulk's goal and Joel Hofer's shutout guided St. Louis past struggling Winnipeg in a tense NHL contest

Faulk, Hofer power Blues to shutout Jets

ST. LOUIS

Justin Faulk scored the lone goal and goaltender Joel Hofer delivered a composed performance in net as the St. Louis Blues edged the Winnipeg Jets 1-0 on Wednesday night. The win marked an important result for the Blues, while extending a difficult stretch for the Jets, who have now dropped five of their last six games.

Hofer was the standout performer for St. Louis, stopping all 24 shots he faced to register his third shutout of the season and the fifth of his NHL career. The contest was the first meeting between the two teams since Winnipeg eliminated St. Louis in dramatic fashion during the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs last season, a series that ended with the memorable Manitoba Miracle in Game 7 on May 4.

Faulk provided the breakthrough late in the second period, scoring his eighth goal of the season with 6:43 remaining. The defenseman converted a well-timed feed from Robert Thomas, firing a shot past Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck to give the Blues a lead they would not relinquish. Hellebuyck finished with 25 saves in a solid outing, but received little offensive support.

Winnipeg's struggles continued to be highlighted by its inability to respond after conceding first. The Jets are now 2-12-1 this season when allowing the opening goal, a statistic that reflects their broader inconsistency. Head coach Scott Arniel did not hide his frustration, pointing to a lack of confidence and accountability. He stressed that preparation and effort are non-negotiable at the NHL level.

Players echoed similar concerns. Forward Kyle Connor admitted the team has been plagued by uneven performances for nearly a month, describing stretches where intensity and execution drop shift by shift. He emphasized the need for collective improvement to halt the slide.

Luis Enrique Hails Historic PSG Triumph in FIFA Intercontinental Cup Final

AL-RAYYAN

FIFA INTERCONTINENTAL CUP FINAL QATAR 2025
CHAMPIONS

Paris Saint-Germain head coach Luis Enrique expressed immense pride and excitement after his side defeated Brazil's Flamengo on penalties to lift the FIFA Intercontinental Cup for the first time in the club's history. The European champions sealed the title following a tense 1-1 draw in regulation time, before prevailing 2-1 in the penalty shootout in a dramatic finale that underlined PSG's resilience and winning mentality.

The victory marked another historic milestone in what has been an extraordinary year for the Parisian club. PSG enjoyed a glittering 2025, having already secured a treble during the 2024–25 season, highlighted by their maiden UEFA Champions League triumph. The Intercontinental Cup success now adds further weight to the club's growing legacy on the global stage.

Flamengo put up a strong fight, responding after PSG took the lead to level the match at 1-1 and force penalties. In the shootout, Russian goalkeeper Matvei Safonov emerged as the decisive figure, producing a stunning display by saving four spot-kicks to secure the trophy for the French champions. His heroics proved pivotal in tilting the contest PSG's way. Speaking after the match, Luis Enrique said the triumph was another defining moment for the club. He noted that PSG had shown the same mentality throughout an incredible and unforgettable year, stressing the importance of consistency, unity, and belief.

Shiva Shankara Stars but India A Strikes Back

MUMBAI

India Senior's GS Shiva Shankara's grand effort with the bat went in vain as India A finally pulled one back in the three-match Physical Disability T20 series, which came to an end at the historic Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday. In the third and final match of the series, India A, after opting to bat, posted 164 for eight in their 20 overs. There were equal contributions from Akash Sanap (32), Prasad Chavan (31), and Jitendra VN (25). For India Senior, the best bowlers were Sunny Goyal (3-17) and Imran Khan (2-49). In their response, India Senior kept losing wickets at regular intervals. The side was struggling at 38 for five and further slipped to 81 for eight.

2026 FIFA WC Champions To Get $50M From Richer Prize Pool

ARGENTINA

The winner of the 2026 World Cup will receive $50 million from a $655 million prize pool, FIFA in announcing record financial rewards for teams in a tournament with ticket prices that have sparked outcries. The champion's figure is up from $42 million won by Argentina in 2022 and $38 million gained by France in 2018 but less than half of what Chelsea earned for winning the much less-hyped Club World Cup this year. The total prize fund for the World Cup, staged in the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, is up 48.9% from the $440 million for the 2022 tournament in Qatar. The 2026 total will be nearly six times the $110 million in prize money for the 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. FIFA president Gianni Infantino in 2023 set a target of equal prize money for men and women at their next World Cups — the next women's tournament is scheduled for 2027 in Brazil.

The Club World Cup, controversially expanded from seven teams to 32 and shoehorned into the soccer calendar last summer, had a total prize fund of $1 billion. Chelsea won the top prize of up to $125 million for a tournament that faced fierce resistance from players and leagues and drew sparse crowds for some matches.

FIFA has a different distribution model for the national team and club tournaments, with the disparity in prize money reflecting factors such as clubs with higher wage costs than national teams.

Beyond prize money, further funds are put toward development of soccer globally.

Infantino said the World Cup will be groundbreaking in terms of its financial contribution to the global football community. In Europe, the Champions League also has a much bigger top prize than the European Championship for national teams. The maximum winnings for last year's Euros were 28.5 million euros ($33.5 million).

UPCA responsible for ticket refunds after abandoned T20I

Excessive fog forced abandonment of India–South Africa T20I in Lucknow, triggering refund concerns and renewed debate on winter scheduling

NEW DELHI

The fourth T20 International between India and South Africa, held at the BRSABV Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow, was abandoned on Wednesday night due to excessive fog and extremely poor visibility, prompting disappointment among spectators and raising questions over ticket refunds. Addressing the issue, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Devajit Saikia clarified that the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA) is the competent authority responsible for overseeing the refund process for ticket holders.

The match could not commence despite multiple inspections by on-field umpires K.N. Ananthapadmanabhan and Rohan Pandit, along with reserve umpire J.R. Madanagopal. As visibility failed to improve, officials eventually called off the game at 9.30 pm, without a single ball being bowled. Under the BCCI's refund policy, spectators are entitled to reimbursement, minus applicable fees, if a match is cancelled or abandoned before play begins.

Explaining the process, Saikia said that all ticketing operations fall under the jurisdiction of the hosting state association. That is under the domain of the state cricket association, which is UPCA. So, this game's hosting state is the UPCA. They will be able to tell you about this, and they are the competent authority, he said, adding that the BCCI only grants hosting rights while logistical and ticketing matters are handled locally.

The abandonment left India with a 2–1 lead in the five-match series, with the fifth and final T20I scheduled to be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Friday. However, the incident has reignited debate over the BCCI's scheduling of international fixtures during North India's winter months, when fog and poor air quality frequently disrupt sporting events. This was the first time a T20 International was staged in Lucknow in December, and the match has now earned the unwanted distinction of being India's first major international fixture abandoned due to excessive fog.

Calcutta High Court Seeks State Report on Messi Chaos

KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday sought a detailed report from the West Bengal government regarding the chaos, vandalism, and alleged mismanagement that occurred during an event featuring Argentine football icon Lionel Messi at the Salt Lake Stadium. The matter came up before a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen, following the filing of three separate public interest litigations (PILs).

The bench directed the state government to submit a comprehensive report on the incident by December 22 and scheduled the next hearing for the same day. Although the matters were listed for hearing on Thursday, counsel representing the state government requested an adjournment. The court agreed to the postponement but made it clear that the government must place its findings before the bench within the stipulated timeline.

The PILs raise serious concerns about crowd mismanagement, vandalism, and alleged financial irregularities connected to the high-profile event. In one of the petitions, senior advocate Billwadal Bhattacharya sought a thorough investigation into the sale of tickets, pointing to wide variations in ticket prices ranging from ₹3,000 to ₹12,000. The petition alleges irregularities in ticket distribution and pricing, demanding accountability from the organisers and authorities involved.

Another PIL, filed by senior advocate Sabyasachi Chattopadhyay, has called for an independent probe by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) into the entire episode. The petition argues that public resources and finances may have been misused and require scrutiny by a constitutional authority.

Chattopadhyay's petition has also challenged the formation of a probe committee announced by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to investigate the mismanagement at the event.

Nathan Lyon Surpasses McGrath to Become Sixth-Highest Test Wicket-Taker

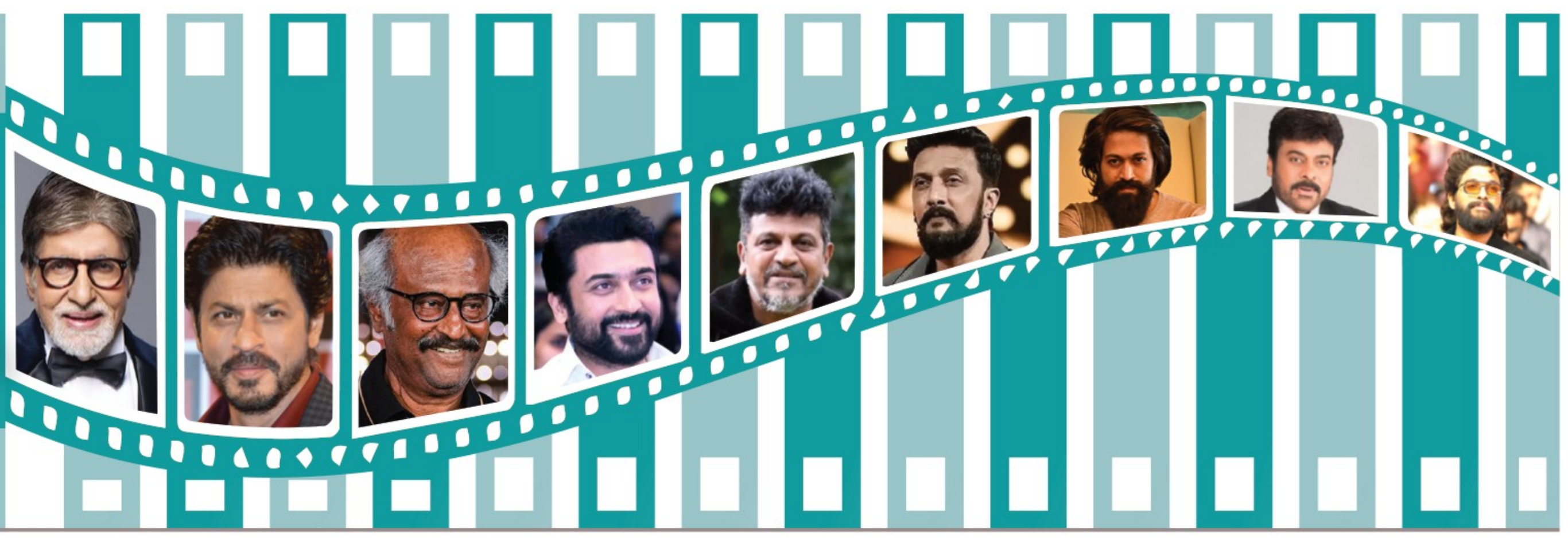
SYDNEY

Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon said he felt humbled after claiming his 564th Test wicket, moving past legendary fast bowler Glenn McGrath to become the sixth-highest wicket-taker in the history of Test cricket. The landmark moment came on Thursday during day two of the third Ashes Test against England at Adelaide, further cementing Lyon's place among the game's greatest bowlers.

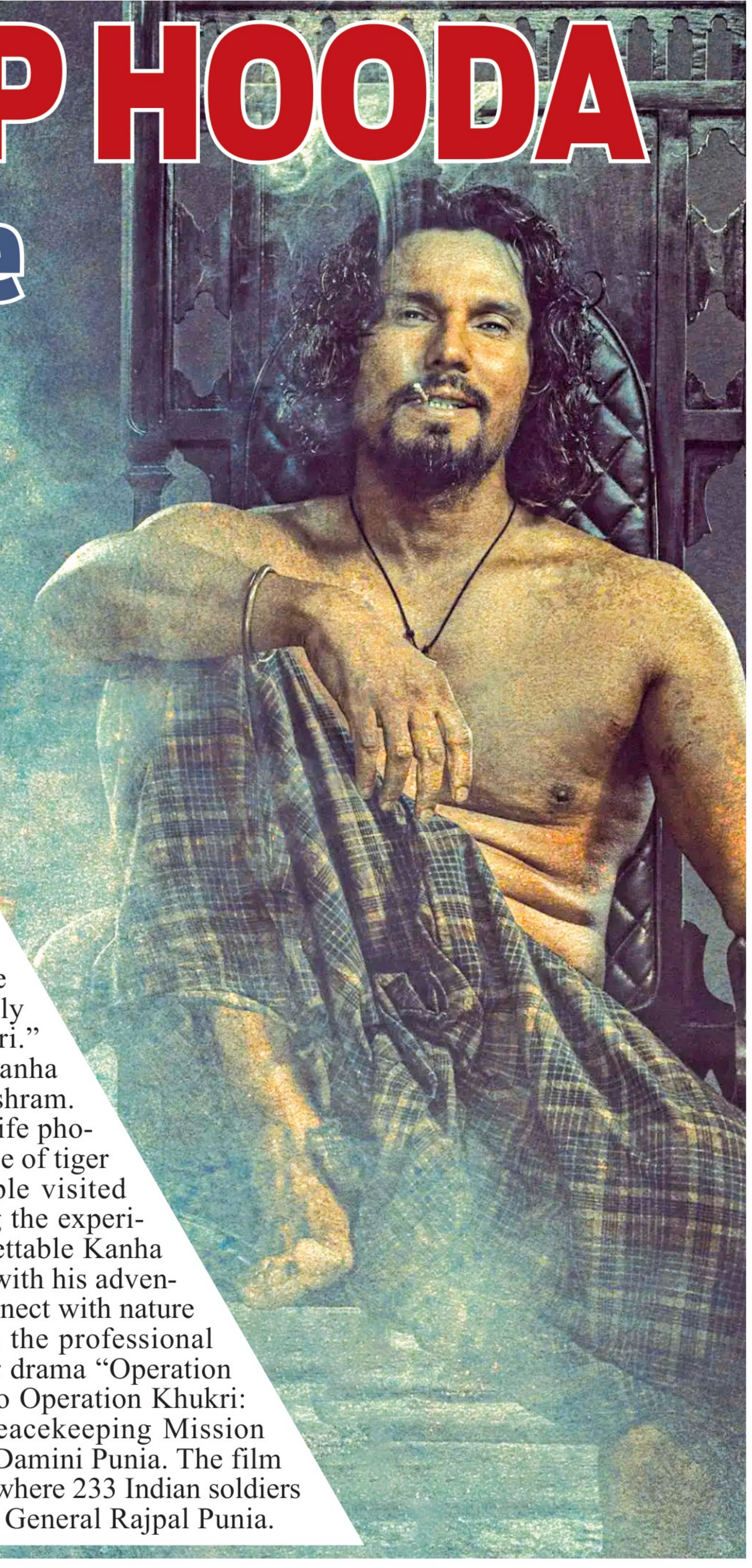
The 38-year-old achieved the feat in his 141st Test match, dismissing England opener Ben Duckett with a classic flighted delivery. The wicket was part of a sensational opening over by Lyon, which also saw him remove Ollie Pope, underlining his enduring skill and match-winning ability. Known for his precision, subtle variations, and relentless consistency, Lyon has been a cornerstone of Australia's red-ball success for more than a decade.

Reflecting on the achievement, Lyon admitted the moment carried deep personal significance. Growing up idolising Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath, he said surpassing McGrath's tally was something he never imagined possible. He described the milestone as extremely special and said it was something he would reflect on later in his career, and even immediately after play. Despite the personal accolade, Lyon was quick to credit his teammates, acknowledging the collective effort required to sustain such longevity and success at the highest level.

With 564 wickets, Lyon now has his sights set on England seamer Stuart Broad, who sits next on the list with 604 wickets, followed by Indian great Anil Kumble on 619. At the top of the all-time standings is Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan with 800 wickets, ahead of Shane Warne (708) and England's Jimmy Anderson (704).



RANDEEP HOODA shares jungle safari adventures publicly



Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda recently gave fans a peek into his adventures in the wild, sharing what he really does during his jungle safaris. Known for his love of nature and wildlife, Hooda posted a lighthearted video showing him taking a nap during a safari, with a friend quietly recording him. He captioned it, "The sleeping lion is also a lion, isn't it? P.S. What I actually do on safaris #JungleeHooda #WildRandeep #Safari." The actor frequently explores national parks like Kanha and Pench, often accompanied by his wife, Lin Laishram. His trips include jeep safaris, forest walks, and wildlife photography, with social media followers getting a glimpse of tiger sightings and scenic landscapes. In June, the couple visited Kanha National Park, sharing images and describing the experience as "Just us, the forest breeze, and some unforgettable Kanha vibes." Randeep Hooda's passion for wildlife aligns with his adventurous public image, and he often uses his trips to connect with nature and inspire fans to appreciate the environment. On the professional front, Hooda is preparing for the upcoming epic war drama "Operation Khukri." He has acquired the official movie rights to Operation Khukri: The Untold Story of the Indian Army's Bravest Peacekeeping Mission Abroad, written by Major General Rajpal Punia and Damini Punia. The film will recount the daring 2000 mission in Sierra Leone, where 233 Indian soldiers were taken hostage, with Hooda set to portray Major General Rajpal Punia.

MADHURI DIXIT reflects on filmmaking evolution

Veteran Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit reflected on how filmmaking and direction have evolved from her debut film Abodh to her upcoming drama Mrs Deshpande, Dixit noted that the film industry has become far more organized over the years, providing actors with better preparation and comfort on set.

Recalling her early days, Dixit explained that during the 1980s and 1990s, only a few producers like Yash Chopra, B. R. Chopra, Subhash Ghai, and Rajshri Productions maintained structured setups.

Other productions relied heavily on spontaneity, often leaving actors to shoot under harsh conditions.

Today, she said, actors receive scripts well in advance, with facilities such as RVs to rest between takes and detailed planning for costumes and looks. Dixit emphasized the importance of preparation, with rehearsals and readings now becoming common, ensuring actors understand their roles thoroughly before filming.

"Back then, we used to sit under the sun with an umbrella over our heads," she recalled humorously, highlighting the contrast to today's organized sets.

The Hum Aapke Hain Koun star also explained her selective approach to acting these days.

She chooses projects that excite her and offer meaningful roles. Dixit said she seeks characters that make her eager to start work every day, collaborating with filmmakers who bring depth and justice to their stories.

With nearly four decades in the industry, Dixit continues to inspire audiences not only with her performances but also with her thoughtful approach to cinema, blending experience, passion, and a clear sense of purpose in choosing her projects.

Teaser released for Adivi Sesh, Mrunal Thakur's 'DACOIT'

The makers of the highly anticipated pan-Indian action drama Dacoit, starring Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur, released an exciting teaser on Thursday, thrilling fans across the country.

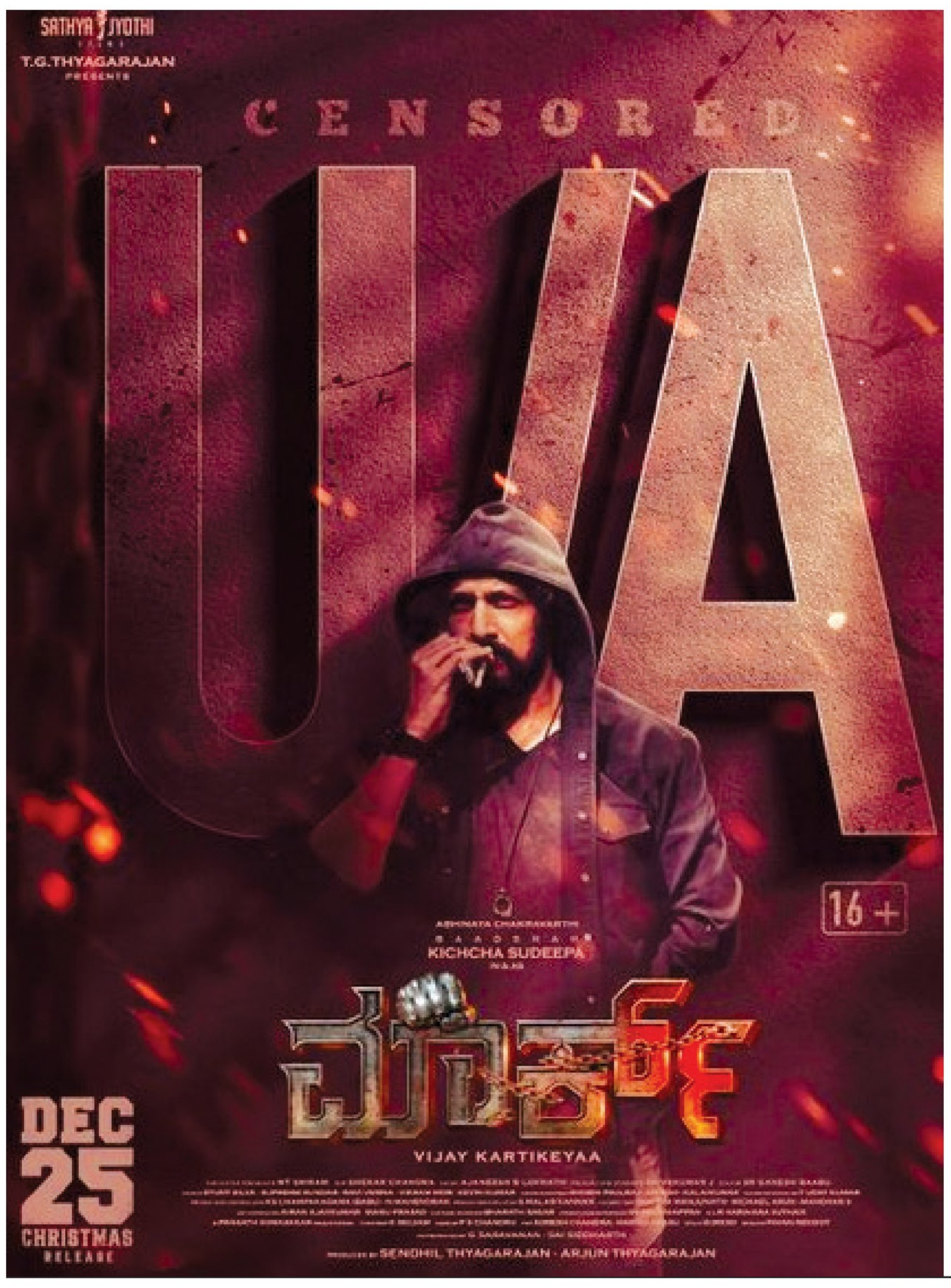
Actor Adivi Sesh shared the teaser on his social media, writing, "The #DacoitTeaser is HERE. BOOM. #DACOIT," celebrating his birthday along with the release.

The teaser introduces Adivi Sesh's character in conversation with an accomplice. A brief dialogue suggests his character persuades Mrunal Thakur's character to take action against someone who wronged her. Soon, both actors are shown dressed as dacoits, embarking on a thrilling mission. The teaser features chase sequences, confrontations, and gunfights, accompanied by the hit song "Kanne Pettaro" from the film Hello Brother.

A previous glimpse revealed that Mrunal's character is addressed as Juliet, with a voice-over hinting at betrayal and trust, while Adivi Sesh's character declares, "I'm here to destroy you," adding suspense to the story. The film, described by the makers as "an explosion of guns and roses… betrayal and trust… and above all, Love and Loss," also stars Anurag Kashyap, Prakash Raj, Sunil, Atul Kulkarni, Zayn Marie Khan, and Kamakshi Bhaskarla.

AN S.S CREATIONS & SUNIEL NARANG PRODUCTION
DACOIT

Kichcha Sudeep's 'Mark' gets U/A clearance



The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has cleared the much-anticipated Kannada action entertainer Mark, starring popular actor Kichcha Sudeep, for release with a U/A certificate. The film is scheduled to hit screens worldwide on December 25, 2025.

Produced by Sathya Jyothi Films in association with Kichcha Creations, Mark is directed by Vijay Kartikeyaa, whose earlier collaboration with Sudeep, Max, was a huge success. The announcement was made on X by the production house, which wrote, "Certified. Charged. Ready. #MARK Kannada - Certified U/A. Releasing Worldwide on Dec 25th. #MARKonDec25 #MARKTheFilm."

Kichcha Sudeep praised his team for their hard work, saying everyone gave their best without taking breaks. He also spoke about comedian Yogi Babu, joking that he worked "in instalments," moving between different sets while keeping the energy high. Despite the long hours, Sudeep said the team stayed motivated and worked together seamlessly, highlighting the professionalism on set.

Alongside Sudeep, the film features Roshini Prakash, Deepshika, Naveen Chandra, Guru Somasundaram, Vikranth, and Yogi Babu. The crew includes Shekar Chandra as cinematographer, Ajaneesh B Loknath composing music, Shivakumar J handling production design, and SR Ganesh Baabu as editor. Stunts are choreographed by Stunt Silva, Supreme Sundar, Vikram Mor, and Kevin Kumar, while Shobhi Paulraj handles dance sequences.

With its engaging story, star-studded cast, and talented crew, Mark is already generating excitement among fans and is expected to be a major hit this holiday season.

Kayadu Lohar joins Dq's 'I'm Game'

Actress Kayadu Lohar has officially joined the cast of the highly anticipated action thriller I'm Game, starring Dulquer Salmaan.

The film, directed by Nahas Hidhayath, has generated strong interest since the release of Dulquer's first-look poster, where he is seen striking a stylish pose with a pistol. Nahas took to Instagram to welcome Kayadu, writing, "Adding sparkle to #ImGame – thrilled to welcome the gorgeous #KayaduLohar!" Kayadu is known for her performance in the Tamil film Dragon, directed by Ashwath Marimuthu, where she played one of the lead roles. Her addition is expected to bring fresh energy to the project.

DULQUER SALMAAN in
I'M GAME
A FILM BY NAHAS HIDHAYATH

I'm Game marks Nahas Hidhayath's next venture after the blockbuster hit RDX. Other key cast members include Antony Varghese, Mysskin, Kathir, Parth Thiwari, and Tamil actress Samyuktha Viswanathan. The film's stunt choreography is handled by Anbariv Masters, who have worked on major pan-Indian hits like Kabali, KGF, Kaithi, Vikram, Leo, and Salaar. Their reunion with Nahas follows the success of RDX. Produced by Dulquer Salmaan and Jom Verghese under his production banner, the film's story is by Nahas Hidhayath, with screenplay by Sajeer Baba, Bilal Moidu, and Ismail Aboobacker. Cinematography is by Jimshi Khalid, editing by Chaman Chakko, music by Jakes Bejoy, costumes by Mashar Hamsa, and production design by Deepak Parameshwaran.

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AKHANDA 2 needs boost in North America

Nandamuri Balakrishna's much-awaited action film, Akhanda 2: Thaandavam, directed by Boyapati Sreenu, opened to a promising start at the box office, thanks to paid premiere shows in India. In North America, the film collected $452,000 from premiere screenings alone, making it the fourth-highest opening for a Balakrishna movie in the region.Despite a last-minute postponement, the distributors managed to secure a good number of screens for the release. So far, Akhanda 2 has earned just over $900,000 in North America. However, collections have slowed down after the initial excitement, partly due to mixed reviews from critics and audiences. Trade analysts suggest the film now needs to pick up momentum to reach its breakeven point in the overseas market.

Adding to the challenge, the upcoming release of James Cameron's Avatar: Fire and Ash is expected to create stiff competition during the second weekend. Industry experts feel that the film could have performed better if it had released on its originally planned date, December 5, but unforeseen issues forced the makers to delay the launch. While the film has shown potential at the start, its future performance in North America will depend on word-of-mouth and sustained audience interest. Fans of Balakrishna hope the movie regains traction so that the action-packed sequel lives up to its high expectations.

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